

Joyous Christmas with love beyond all telling

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PNP says plot fizzled out

No carolers in Infanta; townsfolk still grieving

By Philip C. Tubeza

NO CHRISTMAS carolers wander in this place. Only survivors still searching for their dead.

While the Christian world celebrates Christmas today, the townsfolk of Infanta, Quezon, are still reeling from the tragedy of Tropical Depression "Winnie," which struck on Nov. 29 and swept away not just lives and homes, but also their dreams.

"We are now like a ghost town. Those who have the means have gone to Manila," said Fr. Francisco "Boy" Makabenta, the town's parish priest.

No colorful Christmas decor adorn the houses along muddy streets of the town center, many parts of which were still buried in thick mud. Sixty-three people are still missing while many of the houses damaged by floodwaters and uprooted trees lay empty.

It was only on Wednesday that electricity was restored, but only in some barangays.

"When somebody greets me 'Merry Christmas,' I can't help but cry because I can't feel that there is still Christmas," said Melanie Glorioso, the deputy chief of Infanta's social welfare office.

"It would be rare for a family here to celebrate Christmas. The others have gone to

NO CAROLERS/A14

A YEAR AFTER New village rising where 120 died

By Leticia M. Subang
Contributor

(First of two parts)

SAN FRANCISCO, Panaon Island, Southern Leyte—A new village is slowly taking shape in Barangay Punta.

The survivors of last year's devastating landslides are building new homes at a relocation site, collectively working to get on with their lives.

We gathered once more in Punta on Dec. 19 for the *hugkas* or *babang luksa* (the first death anniversary), which culminated in a Mass and an offering of flowers and candles at the huge wooden cross that marks the place where most of the victims' bodies were found huddled together the day after the landslides.

With us were two boatloads of Limasawa residents led by fishermen Robert Galvez and George Betonio.

On Dec. 19 last year, the two fishermen along with 11 other passengers from Maasin were heading to Limasawa. Navigating with a small compass in the midst of strong rain and

NEW VILLAGE/A4

US debate rages on how to celebrate Christmas

ANO BA
TAMA, HAPPY
HOLIDAYS
O MERRY
CHRISTMAS?



NEW YORK—When US President George W. Bush kicked off his year-end press conference this week by wishing everyone "Happy Holidays," he was flirting with an issue that has triggered protests, lawsuits and boycotts.

Touted as the season of harmony, Christmas in the United States has become a source of discord and debate over how to

US DEBATE/A4



THERE'S room for a smile on the faces of the children in storm-ravaged Infanta, Quezon, as they trudge home over hardened mud with the fruits of the kindness of strangers—relief goods standing in for holiday gifts.

ROGER MARGALLO/A4

Red Cross brings 'noche buena' to typhoon victims in Quezon

By Michael Lim Ubac

QUEZON—In spite of the devastation wrought by a series of typhoons, the spirit of Christmas is alive.

On Christmas Eve, about 10,000 families in the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar had the traditional *noche buena* consisting of spaghetti, noodles, canned goods and cheese; sugar, salt, chocolate

drink, coffee and milk.

Their children ate cakes, cookies and candies and were given new shirts, slippers and toys.

The typhoon victims have only the Philippine National Red Cross and its donors to thank.

On board a Huey helicopter lent by the Philippine Air Force, Sen. Richard Gordon, who is Red Cross chair playing Santa Claus, flew to the towns of Real and Infanta dis-

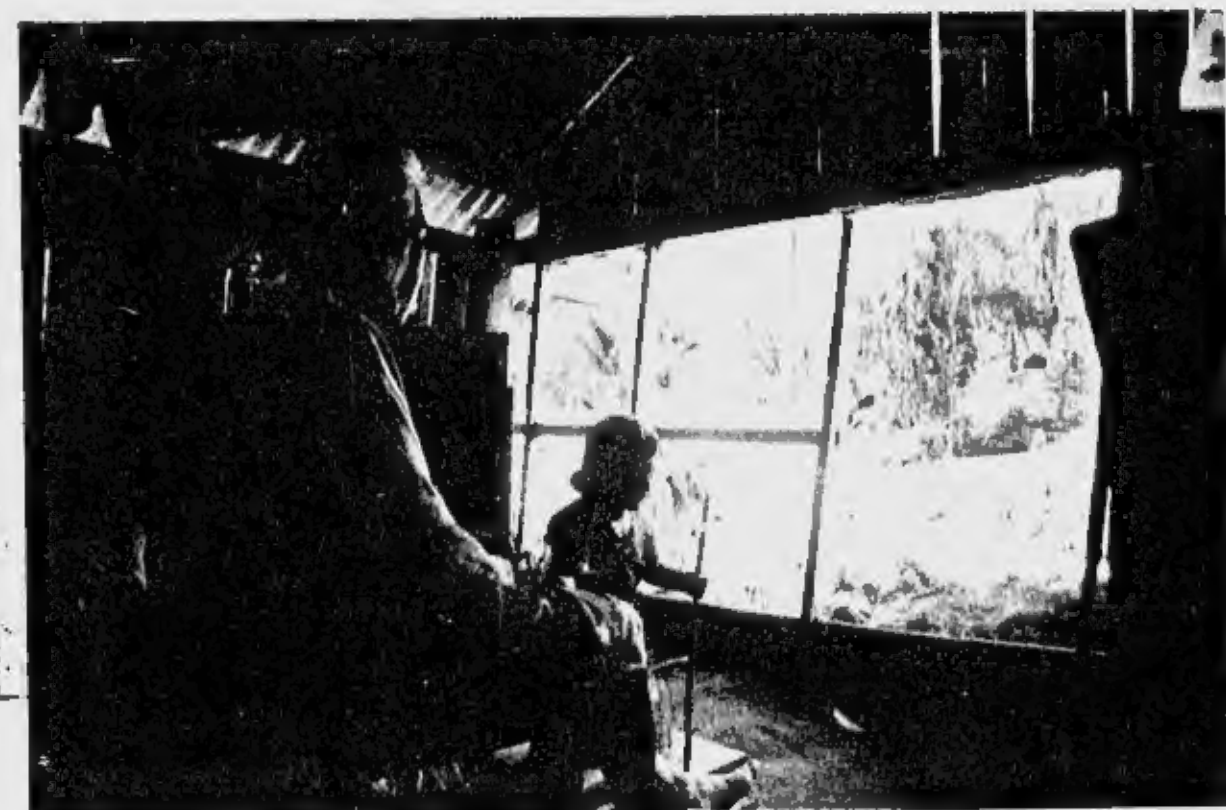
tributing Christmas gift packs worth P1.5 million.

He skipped Nakar due to security concerns, but the goods were delivered to the intended beneficiaries just the same.

Gordon was warmly welcomed by about 2,000 children who cheered, "Merry Christmas," upon seeing him and his Red Cross team.

"This is not patronage. I'm not

RED CROSS/A14



BUT Christmas will be just another day for other Infanta residents like Lucia de los Reyes, 67, whose home was among those wrecked by the killer landslides and floods. An image of the Child Jesus provides a measure of comfort.

REM ZAMORA

FPJ fans won't join march on Malacañang

By Fe Zamora and Alculin Papa

POLITICAL adventurers who had tried to exploit the death of Fernando Poe Jr. to destabilize the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo were rebuffed when the movie idol's followers rejected calls to march on Malacañang after his funeral, a ranking police officer said yesterday.

"They were banking on the strength of the FPJ forces, but they missed assessing correctly that these people were ordinary movie fans who would not be roused to take political actions," said Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, deputy chief of the Philippine National Police's Crime Investigation and Detection Group.

Mendoza said the PNP had monitored "organized political groups" massing in the cities of Makati and Caloocan on Wednesday, ready to move to Mendiola "if the funeral goes decide to march on Malacañang."

But most of those who had earlier queued at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City to view Poe's remains were "legitimate fans in their 50s and 60s," Mendoza said.

He also said the refusal of Poe's widow, Susan Roces, to lead the march on Malacañang was another blow to the alleged destabilization plot.

But the Armed Forces yesterday confirmed that it had questioned a colonel regarding the alleged plot.

Col. Jose Gamus was "invited" to the compound of the Intelligence Service of the AFP in Camp Aguinaldo on Thursday night and questioned, said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, chief of the military's Public Information Office.

PNP/A4

Bonus in Feb. for 1.2-million gov't workers

By Juliet Labog-Javellana
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AFTER a national survey showed a growing number of Filipinos were expecting a bleak Christmas today, Malacañang gave a "bit of good news" to cheer them up—the 1.2 million government employees at least.

There will be a cash bonus for civil servants come February next year, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

"To those of our compatriots who feel that their Christmas this year won't be as happy as in the past, well... we have some bit of good news. It is for the government employees," Bunye said in a dzMM radio interview.

"This is the promise of the government—the cash bonus for Christmas will become a Valentine's bonus," Bunye said.

BONUS/A14

Alabang house boasts of 200 'belens'

By Volt Contreras

CHRISTMAS is not just around the corner—it's in every corner of the house of lawyer Asuncion Kalalo, whose treasured collection of *belen* or Nativity figures has reached over 200 and counting.

Every Yuletide for the last five years, Kalalo's home in posh Ayala Alabang village in Muntinlupa City is transformed into a United Nations of Nativity scenes.

The Christmas tableaux come in

different shapes, sizes, costumes and even, race. They are displayed in the living room, hallways, front door and gate.

There are scenes which tell the story of the Holy Family's "Flight to Egypt."

There is a ceramic painting of the Virgin Mary on a donkey about to breastfeed the infant Jesus with St. Joseph walking ahead, guiding the donkey.

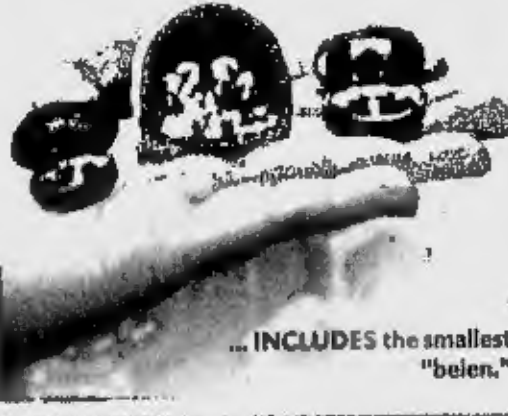
There are chestnut-sized dioramas and free-standing statues—the

ALABANG/A14



PRECIOUS Nativity collection...

DETROY JOHNSON



...INCLUDES the smallest "belen."

DETROY JOHNSON

WEATHER FORECAST
FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA
COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, FOR RESEARCH/12/25/04

Second FRONT PAGE
Text us your feedback: Inquirer news normal/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Bohol/Beaches	Partly Cloudy
Batavia	Partly Cloudy	Bohol	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Bohol	Partly Cloudy
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GMA defends Naia 3 'seizure'

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday defended the state's expropriation of the \$650-million Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3) built by Germany's Fraport AG and its partners, saying the move was only resorted to after talks collapsed.

"The expropriation was undertaken only after all reasonable measures to arrive at a negotiated settlement broke down," President Arroyo said in a statement.

Ms Arroyo's remarks came after Fraport, which operates Frankfurt airport, accused the Philippine government of committing a "further flagrant breach of the law" in taking over the largely completed but unused terminal.

The Manila International Airport Authority took control of Naia 3 last Tuesday, or 19 months after the Supreme Court nullified the contract of the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco)—the consortium which built the terminal—and ordered the government to pay the builder just compensation.

Fraport owns 30-percent of Piatco. The government had stepped up ne-

gotiations with Piatco and Fraport for an amicable settlement when the SC decision became final in March this year and after the President won a fresh term in office.

The President said "two new waves of effort were undertaken" to settle the dispute over the terminal amicably but these failed, not due to the government but because of "deep reasons" that prevented Fraport and other members of the consortium from arriving at a unified position.

Malacañang disclosed that the President also consulted a number of businessmen, lawyers and politicians, including also-ran presidential bet Raul Roco, before the government went ahead with the expropriation.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye confirmed that Roco was asked for his opinion and that this consultation was part of the President's policy to reach out to her rivals in the bitterly contested elections.

Ms Arroyo said "prompt, just compensation will be paid in accordance with Philippine law," adding that due process would be accorded all parties, including the foreign investors.

"The care shown by the three branches of government, and our careful adherence to the law and due process are underscored by the availability of remedies to Piatco every step of the way," the President said.

She said the required sum had been deposited with the expropriation court before the terminal was taken over.

Fraport has demanded the government should pay a minimum of \$350 million euros (\$465 million) for the terminal but officials have said that a three-member commission, appointed by a court, will determine the compensation.

The government earlier offered a P3-billion (\$53.57 million) down payment to Piatco, but Fraport rejected this as inadequate.

The President also justified the takeover of Naia 3, saying it was the government's response to the moves of Piatco and Fraport to file suits in two international arbitration bodies which amounted to questioning the country's sovereignty.

"We are vigorously defending our right to implement our own laws as a sovereign country in the two arbitration proceedings. This includes the constitu-

tional role of the Supreme Court as the final arbiter of the law. Its decision must be fully respected and upheld," said the President who noted that the High Court has already rejected Piatco's motion for reconsideration twice.

In annulling the operating contract with Piatco, the government said the 1998 document signed by the previous government of Joseph Estrada had been disadvantageous to the Philippines.

The President also said she opted to take over the facility because she was "concerned at the unmet need of our overseas Filipino workers, businessmen and tourists who are deprived of a modern, safe and convenient airport terminal."

The terminal has been left unused since major building work was virtually completed in 2002. There had been numerous calls for the terminal to be put in operation to lessen the congestion at existing airport facilities.

Fraport has said it will still pursue its demands for financial compensation in a long-running legal battle that is currently before the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

Gil Cabacungan, AFP

Rush repair of Umiray water tunnel, gov't urged

THE PRESIDENT of the Central Luzon Congressional Caucus yesterday urged the government to rush the repair of the Angat-Umiray transmission pipelines which were damaged by the recent typhoons.

Rep. Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado (Lakas, Bulacan) made the call following a recent statement by Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Administrator Orlando Honrado that irrigation water for Central Luzon, particularly in Bulacan and Pampanga, will be cut by 100 percent starting April 2005.

Alvarado noted that according to Honrado, irrigation supply will have to be cut off to save water to meet the summer needs of households in Metro Manila.

Alvarado said that the 22,000-strong Angat-Maasin Irrigator Association composed of farmers from the two provinces have sought his intercession as the move will affect 26,000 hectares of farmlands.

"The farmers believe that Honrado is being biased to the concessionaires of Manila Water Corp. and Maynilad," Alvarado said, referring to the Ayala and Lopez-owned water firms servicing Metro Manila.

Alvarado explained that based on the current sharing system for Angat Dam's capacity of 60 centimeters of water, 36 cm should go for the irrigation of farmlands in 17 municipalities of Bulacan and four towns in Pampanga, and 22 cm are for MWSS for distribution in Metro Manila.

"But in practice, the MWSS is drawing 53 cm per year, leaving a very minimal amount for the farmlands," he said. "The worst part is that almost 50 percent of the water drawn (by MWSS) is unaccounted due to busted and unrepaired pipes."

Alvarado also said that based on a World Bank study, industrial establishments in Metro Manila have more than two to three water connections and "only one of these is metered."

"There is really a need for the MWSS to rush the repair of the Angat-Umiray transmission pipes and solve the problem of water shortage," Alvarado said. **Carlito Pablo**



CHRISTMAS IS ALIVE
Children's faces light up as they open their gift packs from the Philippine National Red Cross. Some 10,000 families in the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar, devastated by recent typhoons, enjoyed the traditional *noche buena* of spaghetti, noodles, canned goods, cheese, sugar, salt, chocolate drinks, coffee and milk. **ROGER MARGALLO**

'Kiwis' warned RP 'high risk' area for travel

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—New Zealand travelers were advised on Christmas Eve that the Philippines is a high risk area for travel, with a heightened threat of terrorism throughout the country.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said Friday that the "high risk" ranking "reflects new information suggesting an increased terrorist threat" in areas including Manila. It said there was a serious risk of terrorism and kidnapping, and warned New Zealanders to be very careful.

It didn't cite sources, saying only that "this travel advice has been reviewed, reissued, and upgraded on Dec. 24, 2004."

It recommended that tourism and nonessential travel be deferred for all areas of the Philippines, and that the southern Philippines be avoided altogether.

The no-travel areas included all of Mindanao, Sulu archipelago including Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi island groups, the ministry said on its Website.

Last week, New Zealand along with Australia, the United States, Britain and Japan warned that terrorists were preparing to launch attacks against Western targets in Indonesia.

Australia's warning was unusually specific, saying it had "credible information" that terrorists could be targeting the Hilton Hotel chain in the country. The warnings from the other nations did not mention specific targets.

Indonesian authorities and hotels immediately tightened pre-Christmas security. **AP**

3 execs get Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship awards

THE SINGAPORE government has awarded this year's Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship to three outstanding Filipinos.

In a press statement, the Singapore Embassy identified the recipients as Mrs. Lea Ricolcol, chief of staff to the secretary of energy; Dr. Lilibeth David, chief of health policy division, Department of Health; and Mr. Lyndon Paul Daz, deputy administrator of the Livelihood Corp., Department of Agriculture.

The Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship is designed to prepare civil servants for higher leadership positions in their organizations. Lee Kuan Yew Fellows will enroll in a year-long Master in Public Management (MPM) program at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. The program is organized jointly by the Na-

tional University of Singapore and Harvard University. It includes a seven-week stint at the Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and a study visit to Washington D.C.

During the award ceremony at the embassy on Thursday, Charge d'Affaires Paul Koh congratulated the Fellows as "very worthy representatives of the Philippines." Koh urged them to maximize the benefits from this program when they return to the Philippines upon graduation. He also reiterated Singapore's commitment to share its experience in training and human development resource with its Asian neighbors.

Also present at the ceremony were Energy Secretary Vincent Perez; Bernardo Mitra, administrator of the Livelihood

Corp.; Dr. Mario Villaverde, Health Policy Development and Planning bureau director; Ms Editha Abergas, OIC executive officer of the Special Committee on Scholarships, NEDA; relatives and friends of the Fellows.

Offering his response on behalf of the Philippine government, Perez thanked the Singapore Government for the opportunity the Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship offers to senior civil servants in the Philippines. Drawing from his own experience of having lived in Singapore, Perez urged the Fellows to experience Singaporean culture, "particularly the food" and places of interest.

The Fellows will leave for Singapore in January. The Fellowship covers full tuition fees, return airfare, accommodation, living allowance, medical benefits and insurance.

Palace sees more oil price cuts in January

MALACAÑANG expects more fuel price cuts early next month after oil companies slashed their pump prices between 30 centavos and 35 centavos per liter beginning Thursday.

"Based on our calculations, we can still expect more price cuts but not within this year. Probably, in the early weeks of January we can expect lower prices if the declining trend in oil prices continue in the world market," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

The oil companies cited falling world crude oil prices of Dubai crude oil and diesel and unleaded gasoline in the benchmark Singapore market for their decision to cut pump prices.

Malacañang is satisfied with the rate of decline in local fuel prices even though the industry's private watchdog, the Consumer and Oil Price Watch, argued that oil companies should have reduced prices by a larger amount.

"We give importance to the opinion of Mr. Raul Concepcion (Price Watch chair) who we all know really monitors the detailed movement of world oil prices," Bunye said. **Gil Cabacungan**

Leave Susan alone, Nene tells opposition politicians

By Christina O. Avendaño

"LET her be."

On the eve of Christmas Day, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., appealed to the opposition not to push Susan Rocas, the widow of Fernando Poe Jr., into doing something she clearly wanted no part of.

"It may be cruel to burden her with partisan political agenda when she's totally uninclined to accept that role," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

Pimentel was reacting to the statement that the direction of the opposition would depend on the plans of Rocas, who buried her husband just three days ago. Poe died last week after suffering a massive stroke.

Former Sen. Francisco Tatad had said the other day that Rocas was the "inspiration" of the opposition right now and that they would "wait for word on what she wants to do."

Rocas stunned a lot of people when she spoke her mind during the seven-day wake for Poe who narrowly lost to President Macapagal-Arroyo in the hotly contested May presidential election. The movie actress lashed back at the critics of her husband, particularly the way his detractors tried to put him down as just a mere actor when he ran for president.

Pimentel said Rocas had made it clear in her media interviews that she was not interested in entering politics.

The leader of the Senate minority

urged fellow oppositionists "not to allow partisan political considerations to taint (Rocas') stand on basic issues such as those relating to the poor."

"Let her be," he added.

He admitted that opposition members have different opinions in defining its direction, with Poe's death.

In the Senate, Pimentel had already moved to unify ranks of the opposition with his call for Senators Edgardo Angara and Panfilo Lacson, both members of the nine-member minority and bitter rivals since the last election, to work together.

Poe's running mate, former Sen. Loren Legarda, had said that in the wake of Poe's death the opposition would have to re-assess its role.



ROCAS

Palace sure Estrada coming back after HK surgery

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACANANG yesterday reiterated its assurance that ousted President Joseph Estrada would come back to the country after undergoing knee

surgery in Hong Kong.

Estrada is set to leave tomorrow after the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court, which is trying him for plunder, allowed him to have a medical treatment in a Hong Kong hospital from

Dec. 26 to Jan. 15.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye disputed the position of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson and chief government prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio that Estrada would seek politi-

cal asylum to evade facing the charges of plunder, a non-bailable crime punishable by death.

Bunye said Estrada's undertaking with the Bureau of Immigration and the Hong Kong government was clear assurance that

he would return to the country after his medical treatment.

"There is no chance the former president will not come back to the Philippines as alleged by Governor Singson," Bunye said in a radio interview.

'SADDEST' 4th Christmas in jail for Erap

By Armand N. Nocum

IT'S A bleak Christmas for former President Joseph Estrada.

Speaking through his spokesperson Didagen Dilangalen, Estrada said his fourth Christmas in jail was made more painful by the recent death of actor Fernando Poe Jr., Estrada's buddy of 40 years.

"This is one of my saddest Christmas," Dilangalen, a former Maguindanao congressman, quoted Estrada as saying.

"He (Poe) was like a brother to me and a very close friend," Estrada said.

Estrada also complained of being in pain, caused by his arthritic knees and slipped disc. He is set to go to Hong Kong tomorrow for a knee replacement operation.

When he delivered a midnight eulogy for Poe last Tuesday, Estrada said he was gripping hard at the rostrum to keep himself from falling.

"I was in pain the whole time, but I tried not to show it," said Estrada, who claims to be unable to stand for a long period of time.

Estrada said he also missed his sickly mother Mary Ejercito. He had visited her before proceeding to Poe's wake.

But Estrada said he might ask for a new Christmas furlough so he could spend more time with his mother before proceeding to Hong Kong.

He said his mother was one reason why there was no basis to allegations that he would

not return.

"I'm no flight risk," he said in reaction to the warning aired by Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson and several prosecutors that Estrada would no longer return to the country should he be allowed to leave.

He also downplayed talk that he was behind a new destabilization plot. "Why is it that I'm always being blamed when there are reports of a coup?" said Estrada, who was also linked to the Oakwood mutiny last year.

He scoffed at reports that there were plans to put up a military junta, with Poe's wife Susan Roces being installed as a figurehead.

"Malabo yan (That cannot happen)," he said of Roces, who had repeatedly appealed to Poe's fans not to inject politics in his wake or burial.

He said Christmas eve would have him spending time with his close relatives, including Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who was set to visit at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, yesterday afternoon.

Contracted by the INQUIRER, the young Estrada said he too felt his father's pain, having spent one Christmas with the former President in jail. Father and son are facing plunder and perjury charges before the Sandiganbayan.

"It was so sad being by our lonesome selves during the noche buena," he said of the traditional Filipino gathering and feast on Christmas eve.

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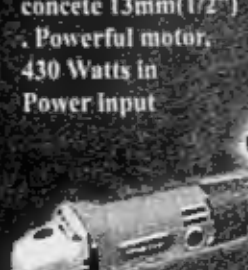
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PER DOH-BFAD PERMIT NO. 5448 S. 2004

PNP says plot fizzled out

From page A1

Gamus had been restricted to quarters—the military version of house arrest—for campaigning for the late opposition standard-bearer in the May election. He was returned to his quarters in Fort Bonifacio after being questioned, Pascual said.

"But he is still under guard. Let's just wait for the final report from the Isafp," Pascual told reporters.

No arrests

According to Pascual, Gamus did not stay very long in the Isafp compound and there has been "no new arrest" of any other active military officer in connection with the alleged plot.

Military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano confirmed this, saying: "The AFP has not arrested any officer in connection with destabilization moves. However, the AFP intelligence units are continuously monitoring

threats this Yuletide season."

He said the public should "continue the celebration of the holidays" and "not worry about" the supposed plot.

Yano also said that Gamus had been granted a leave when his father died, and that he was called in Thursday night to be accounted for and later returned to quarters.

On Wednesday, the day Poe was buried, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez warned of "credible intelligence reports that there is an evolving conspiracy on the part of some groups" to use the movie idol's death to stir up a plot against the Arroyo administration.

That same day, Pascual aired the possibility that a destabilization move would be launched by groups bent on taking advantage of the crowd during Poe's funeral.

Not fugitives

Poe never conceded defeat in the May election, and his supporters continue to insist that he had been cheated.

GMA: Christmas most meaningful in face of many challenges

THIS Christmas should be most meaningful to Filipinos after they weathered many challenges with a deep, abiding faith in God, President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday.

The President also thanked the Filipinos for supporting her despite alleged new plots to unseat her.

She paid tribute to Filipino fortitude after Social Weather Stations said a growing number of Filipinos expected a sad Christmas.

Filipinos have a deep and

overflowing faith that carried them through the many challenges in their personal lives and as a nation, according to Ms Arroyo.

"Ang mga reporma na aking sinimulan upang pagsalin ang korupsiyon, pagyamanin ang kabang bayan, at pasiglahin ang ekonomiya ay sama-sama nating isulong hanggang ang kahirapan ay mawakasan (Let us pursue the reforms I have started to curb corruption, raise revenue collection and improve the economy so we can end poverty)," she said.

Gamus, a 1976 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, was last assigned to the 9th Infantry Brigade based in Bicol.

During the election campaign, he was reportedly spotted in Basilan and other provinces in the South where he

was previously assigned, allegedly campaigning for Poe in violation of military regulations. He has been restricted to quarters since then.

Reuters reported on Thursday that two unnamed colonels had been arrested in relation to the alleged destabilization plot.

But all Pascual told reporters on that day was that the AFP was monitoring the movements of two colonels whom he declined to name.

The other colonel was later identified as Oscarito Mapalo.

Yano stressed yesterday that Gamus and Mapalo were neither "wanted" by the military nor were they fugitives.

He likewise stressed that they had not been arrested for involvement in any destabilization plot.

'He refused'

Mapalo, who served as deputy chief of the Army's Ordnance and Chemical Unit, has been on terminal leave since Aug. 13.

Mendoza yesterday said he had tried to convince Mapalo to appear at a press conference "to denounce the others who were involved in the plot."

"He refused," Mendoza said.

According to Mendoza, Mapalo was contacted by opposition groups to join the alleged plot to oust Ms Arroyo after being bypassed by a "rotten and politicized" system of promotion in the AFP.

Mapalo, a member of the PMA Class of 1979, was last assigned to the Army's Logistics unit in Fort Bonifacio.

He called a press conference two months ago to denounce the Army promotions board for supposedly falsifying his records to make it appear he was not qualified for promotion.

The military denied this, saying that Mapalo went through the required evaluation for promotion to the next rank, but failed to make it to the quota. With an AFP report

US debate rages on how to celebrate Christmas

From page A1

celebrate the holiday without promoting religion in a way that might alienate non-Christians.

The argument is a perennial one, but this year, with the Christian right taking credit for Bush's reelection, traditionalists are fighting harder than ever against what they see as a political effort to take the Christ out of Christmas.

"A covert and deceptive war has been waged on Christmas to remove any mention of it from the public square during the Christmas season," declares the California-based Committee to Save Merry Christmas on its website.

The committee has launched a campaign to boycott major retailers, including big-name depart-

ment stores like Macy's, which favor in-store decorations proclaiming "Happy Holidays" or "Season's Greetings" rather than "Merry Christmas."

"It is regrettable that an attempt to bring all people together in peace and love at this time of year is being perceived as offensive by some when clearly the attempt is just the opposite," Macy's spokesperson Carol Sanger said in response to the boycott call.

"Merry Christmas" supporters back their argument by citing numerous examples where secular sensitivities are generally seen to have been taken too far.

Carols banned

A school district in New Jersey achieved national media atten-

tion for banning Christmas carols, even instrumental versions, while the organizers of a "Winterfest" in Wichita, Kansas, opted to call their Christmas tree a "community tree."

The main battleground for the Happy Holidays vs Merry Christmas debate is the public school system, as witnessed by two letters to the New York Times this week.

Andrea Economos from Scarsdale, New York, wrote to express his outrage at being forbidden from discussing the religious significance of Christmas in his daughter's second-grade class.

"I may share my holiday traditions," but I may not say that Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God and that this is a

miracle," Economos said. "I may not say that this is the true meaning of Christmas for Christians."

On the other hand, Deb Di Gregorio, from New Jersey, described her delight at attending her 6-year-old daughter's school holiday concert, where traditional Christmas songs were excised in favor of those that celebrated seasonal themes of family, friendship.

"The parents oohed and ahed and applauded with enthusiasm. Everyone left smiling," Di Gregorio wrote. "Sometimes 'limitations' make us so much more creative and help us look at our world anew."

The American holiday season kicks off with the nondenominational celebration of Thanksgiv-

ing, but then gets more complicated with the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, closely followed by Christmas.

Jewish groups

Jewish groups have been prominent in lobbying schools to keep the seasonal celebrations inclusive for the 18 percent of Americans who are non-Christians.

"People get carried away on both sides," said Todd Gutnick, a spokesperson for the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, which sends letters out to schools every year offering guidelines for recognizing religious and cultural diversity.

"We are not out to ban Christmas," Gutnick said. "We're just worried about situations, in a

school for example, where a child might feel alienated. That can be hurtful."

The ADL cited an incident when students in one classroom were working on Christmas-angel arts and crafts project, and Jewish students were instructed to leave and work on another project in the hallway.

A lighter resolution to the debate has been put forward by the creators of the television teen soap, "The O.C.," in the form of a hybrid holiday called "Chrismukkah."

The idea has gained some traction among interfaith couples and even spawned a website selling Chrismukkah gifts, including T-shirts with slogans like "Oy Joy" and "Merry Mazeltov." AFP

New village rising where more than 120 died

From page A1

zero visibility, they missed Limasawa and found refuge in Punta—only to be shocked by a series of landslides a few minutes after they pulled their boat ashore.

It was Galvez and Betonio who brought my cousin, Eduardo "Bebot" Subang, who was seriously wounded, to the provincial hospital in Maasin the next day. Bebot's leg later had to be amputated.

"We wanted to visit Bebot and see how he is doing," Betonio said as we gathered along the shore after the Mass.

"Punta will always be part of us," added Galvez.

Constantly in fear

The survivors of Punta can easily validate the ordeal that the residents of devastated Real in Quezon—which was hit by four successive storms early this month—are now experiencing.

According to Barangay Captain Ricky Subang, all 22 barangays of San Francisco have passed a resolution to set aside some money to be donated to the families displaced by the landslides and flash floods in Quezon.

The rains brought by the recent storms have also triggered landslides in Panason, but smaller in scale and farther from the villages.

Yet some residents are constantly in fear. In the nearby barangay of Sta. Paz, where a huge crack resulting from geological faults has been found on the mountain, classes are suspended and the residents prepare to evacuate whenever it rains continuously for at least two days.

Many of the survivors, particularly the children, still live with the trauma caused by the tragedy. Thunder, lightning and heavy rains send the children crying and cringing in fear.

Nightmare

Some of the elderly, particularly those who lost their spouses in the landslides, often fall into moments of deep silence. Or they resurrect their lost loved ones by recalling funny anecdotes, and in the next breath scaring themselves with stories of apparitions and ghosts.

Our relatives keep going back to Punta, hoping to retrieve lost valuables from the earth that

crashed down on their homes that fateful night.

On Christmas Day last year, while temporarily living with relatives, Bartolome Subang or Tiyo Ome wished aloud that he had not lost the vintage carpentry tools my grandfather passed on to him before Lolo died in 1980. He knew he would need those tools once construction at the relocation site started.

Florencio Subang (Tiyo Florin) wanted to return to Punta that night, after realizing that in the confusion, he had left a wad of cash in his cabinet. But his children insisted that they keep on moving.

Along the road Tiyo Florin spotted and greeted his cousin Paterno Subang (Tiyo Pater), who was holding a flashlight and an umbrella.

Tiyo Florin, together with his younger children, later made it to the town safely.

Manong Gaudencio Benero is still haunted by the nightmare of skulls and skeletons that he had shortly before the tragedy.

Upon learning that the first landslide had destroyed Tiyo Pater's house, Manong Gaudencio instinctively knew that the nightmare had begun.

There were only four people living in that house—Tiyo Pater, his wife Tiya Pering, and their two grandchildren.

Manong Gaudencio's elder brother, Patron, also did not make it, and it took our relatives three months to find the bodies of Tiyo Pater and Tiya Pering.

2-month-old baby

Tiyo Florin's son Ricky, the barangay captain, found himself on a more uncertain path that night.

The third landslide was now blocking the road his father had taken only a few minutes earlier. Ricky's group was forced to go toward the shore, only to move inward again after they found they could not cross Kagpanga, the river that separates Punta and the town.

Clutching his 2-month-old son, Ricky led his group through the clan's rice fields, grappling with waist-deep mud and thorny nipa fronds, constantly calling out the names of his other children and his companions, refusing to move further until he had heard them reply.



SURVIVORS in Barangay Punta help each other build a new village in true "bayanihan" style.

LETICIA H. SUBANG/CONTRIBUTOR

Ricky and Tiyo Florin were eventually reunited in the house of our aunt, Jenny Subang, who lives across from my parents' house in the town.

Max, Ricky's baby and the youngest survivor, emerged from the ordeal unscathed.

Another aunt, Carmen Gitigan, could not imagine how she made it through that night.

She was in her house, standing on top of a table and trying to reach something when she was swept by the raging mud toward the sea. She found herself still on top of her table, floating on the water.

Whole family

Meanwhile, Tiyo Ome, totally buried in the mud, was losing hope—until he realized that he had been pushed toward the sea and was thus able to slowly swim to safety.

His wife, Tiya Rosing, and the entire family of his daughter, Renee Subang Paug, the principal of the town's high school and my childhood playmate, perished that night.

Renee's daughter, Karen, had just arrived that evening from So-god where she was studying.

Tiyo Ome's son, Bebot, was seriously wounded and had to be confined in the Maasin hospital for weeks.

More than 120 Punta residents died on Dec. 19, 2003. Our clan

lost 26 children—16 in grade school and 10 in high school.

My mother, Peregrina, particularly misses the kids who used to kiss her hand and greet her every morning as they pass our house on their way to school.

Opening old wounds

Watching the images on TV of the recent tragedy in Quezon is like opening old wounds. I am brought to tears as I remember receiving phone calls from my relatives the day after the landslides, frantically asking for help.

I also remember thinking that with the coming year being an election year, politicians were bound to use our tragedy to project themselves.

But I could not understand how a presidential party, supported by elaborate media coverage and security arrangements, could visit our place and yet could not provide masks, gloves, boots and body bags so we could perform the grim task of pulling out our dead from the mud in order to give them a decent burial.

Every year, our country is hit by typhoons, floods, earthquakes and other calamities, both natural and man-made. We have had a devastating earthquake in Baguio, towns buried in tons of ash from Mt. Pinatubo, countless numbers of lives lost in Ormoc, Cherry Hills, Payatas, and Ozona ... The list is endless.

In fact, the tragic death of Speaker Jose de Venecia's youngest daughter only highlighted a pathetic condition—our continuing incapability to immediately respond to emergencies.

Yet our generosity during times of crisis and our ability to bounce back after seemingly insurmountable challenges are admirable and amazing.

"We have gone through a lot of difficulties in trying to rehabilitate our community and rebuild our lives. But we have also experienced how generous people can be in times of crisis," Ricky said.

Far from forgotten

The past year was not an easy one for the Punta survivors.

As they tried to cope with the trauma, they bickered with one another, presented to and argued their cause with various government officials and donors, got caught in the heat of partisan politics during the May elections, and even had to deal with a bit of religious intolerance. (We trace our roots to the Philippine Independent Church; many Punta residents are now affiliated with the Catholic Church.)

The survivors strove to keep the clan's enclave, which had survived for four generations.

They could not even begin to think of changing the name of their barangay—Punta, or "point," a simple geographic de-

scription of the fishing village that is now deserted but far from forgotten.

The settlement was started by my great grandparents, Marcela Moreno and Eusebio Subang in the 1800s. My grandfather, Gerardo, born in 1896, was one of the 13 children of Eusebio and Marcela.

Nobody lives in Punta anymore. But the people regularly visit it—to harvest coconuts from the trees that have remained, or to gather driftwood along the shore for their firewood.

The fishermen, lured by Punta's rich waters, keep coming back to cast their nets. Along its shores, entangled among the corals, are shreds of clothes, blankets and mosquito nets, toys and many other parts of their lives.

Picking up the pieces

And with the help of relatives, various government agencies and civic groups, the survivors have been able to cope with the tragedy.

For the relocation of the 98 households that survived the landslides, the family of Rosario Peregrino Maglana, a member of our clan, donated a piece of land by the national highway, and the municipal government of San Francisco acquired the adjacent property.

Now based in Davao, Tiya Sayong had requested that a portion of the land be reserved for her family so she could eventually live with them as she had earlier intended.

She had always dreamed of retiring in Punta and was about to purchase a lot near the village chapel, but the landslides crushed that dream.

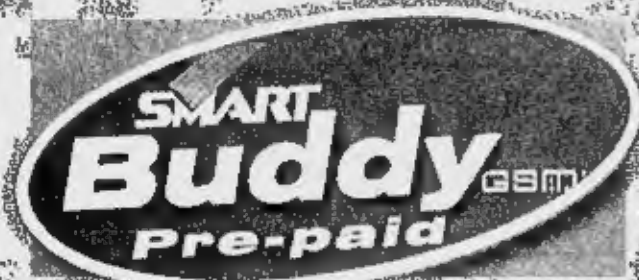
The houses are still unfinished, but the survivors now live there. They continue to build using materials supplied by the Red Cross, with financial support from the US government.

The new village will be called Barangay Punta Extension.

Because it is far from the sea, we will miss the times when the village folk gather on the shore to meet the fishermen blessed with a good catch and help them remove the fish entangled in the nets.

It was one of the communal activities that bound the village folk together in the past, and that cannot be replicated at the relocation site.

To be concluded



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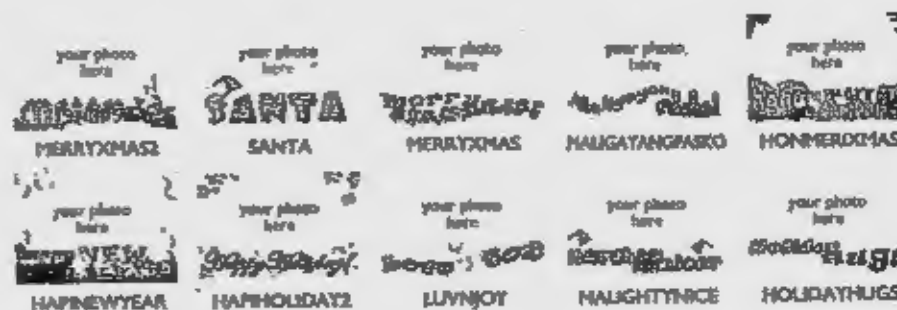
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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Diggers uncover site of Jesus miracle

JERUSALEM—Archeologists in Jerusalem have uncovered the stone remains of the biblical Siloam Pool, were the Bible says Jesus restored a blind man's eyesight—underlining the link between the works of Jesus and ancient Jewish rituals.

Tucked away in what is now the Arab neighborhood of Silwan, archeologists are slowly digging out the pool, where water still runs in the channel that brought water from a nearby spring.

The Siloam Pool was used by

Jews for ritual immersions for about 120 years until the year 70, when the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple.

Many of Jesus' acts are directly linked to Jewish rituals, and the miracle of the blind man is an ex-

ample. Jesus put clay in the blind man's eyes and then told him to wash them out in the pure waters of the Siloam Pool, restoring his eyesight. (John 9: 1-7).

In the last four months, archeologists have revealed the pool's 50-meter length and a channel that brought water from the Silwan Spring to the pool. In the past week, a section of stone road that led from the pool to the Jew-

ish Temple was uncovered.

"The moment that we revealed and discovered this four months ago, we were 100 percent sure it was the Siloam Pool," said Eli Shukron, one of the archeologists on the dig.

"We know today that the Siloam Pool is connected to the Temple Mount. There is a road that connects between the two elements. The entire system is

clearer today," Shukron said.

Stephen Pfann, a Bible scholar, said that the pool's waters were considered so pure that they could purify even a healed leper.

Pfann said Jesus likely chose to cure the blind man using the purest water available, because people with any disabilities were barred from the Temple.

"The whole point in John's Gospel is that people should not only be

healed physically but also healed spiritually," Pfann said. "This discovery helps bring the Gospel alive in the context of Jewish practice."

The archeologists excavating the site work for the Israel Antiquities Authority. They found biblical-era coins marked with ancient Jewish writing, along with pieces of broken pottery—including a stone bottle cork—helping them confirm that the area was the biblical Siloam Pool. AP

Gunmen massacre 23 aboard Honduras bus

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras—Unknown assailants opened fire on a public bus in northern Honduras late Thursday, killing at least 23 passengers and wounding 16 others, apparently many women and children, police said.

The shooting took place at 7:40 p.m. local time in the northern Atlantic city of Chamelecon, 200 km north of the capital, Tegucigalpa, said police spokesperson Deputy Commissioner Wilmer Torres.

"It was an unbelievable massacre," he said in a telephone interview.

Police in the nearby industrial city of San Pedro Sula had arrested one suspect, believed to be a member of the violent Mara Salvatrucha gang, who was driving a vehicle similar to that identified by witnesses as having participated in the attack. Authorities seized a .38-cal. pistol and several automatic weapons from the

suspect, and had begun interrogating him, Torres said.

The assailants left a large piece of paper taped to the bus' front windshield with a message saying they represented a revolutionary group that opposes the death penalty. The message contained "vulgar words" against congressional President Porfirio Lobo Sosa and Security Minister Oscar Alvarez, Torres said.

The attack came just two days after Alvarez announced that authorities had uncovered plans by drug traffickers and local criminals to assassinate Honduran President Ricardo Maduro and his family, as well as himself.

"The reports establish that drug traffickers and organized crime have given the gang members the necessary information for them to carry out the attack against the president... and that worries us," Alvarez said at the time. AP

Ex-Iraq hostage describes ordeal as 'planet Bin Laden'

PARIS—One of two French journalists freed after a four-month hostage ordeal in Iraq on Thursday spoke of having been "immersed in Planet (Osama) bin Laden" as the pair began giving media interviews after their return to Paris and debriefing by French authorities.

Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot had spent their first day back in France recounting details of their ordeal to the foreign intelligence agency DGSE, before rejoining their families later in the day.

"One of the lessons we drew from our captivity was that we were immersed in planet Bin Laden, especially when we were in a cell of the Islamic Army in the north" of Iraq, Malbrunot told France 2 public television.

"We really understood that these kidnappers were driven not by an Iraqi agenda, but by an agenda of Islamic holy war," said the journalist, speaking from his home town of Montargis-en-Forez in central France.

Malbrunot also issued a stern warning to fellow journalists about the dangers of working in Iraq.

"We urge them to be very careful. Our kidnappers told us: 'Do not come back to Iraq, this is a land of war and we do not need you here. We want to settle our scores with the Americans,'" he said.

"The country is crawling with armed men who are out fishing for Westerners," Malbrunot added.

In an interview with France Info radio, Christian Chesnot also warned that "Iraq is a land at war and any foreigner can be seen as a spy."

The two men were flown back from Baghdad to Paris on Wednesday evening, where they were greeted by President Jacques Chirac and reunited with their loved ones amid a national outpouring of joy and relief.

But the happy end to their ordeal was partly overshadowed by a row over an abortive attempt by a French deputy, Didier Julia of Chirac's Union for a Popular Movement, to negotiate their release.

A senior member of the DGSE told Le Figaro newspaper—for which Malbrunot works—that Julia's intervention in September had gravely compromised official efforts to contact the Islamic Army in Iraq.

"The hostage-takers followed the Julia epic on television and obviously they accused us of trying to short-circuit them with a separate team. Suddenly we were in a void, confronted by silence," the unnamed official said.

Malbrunot himself said he was "scandalized" by (Julia's) behavior—playing with the lives of two compatriots. It is beneath contempt." AFP



FREED hostage Malbrunot kissing girlfriend Sylvie Cherpin Dec. 23.



A GLITTERING Christmas tree lights up the Hamburg skyline Dec. 23.

AFP

Beware the holiday heartburn

By Alicia Chang

ALBANY, New York—For heartburn sufferers, navigating the glutinous dinner table during the holiday season can be especially tricky.

Heartburn tends to occur more frequently during the holidays because people feast more than they normally would. And the types of food they eat are decked with more calories and fat, which can slow digestion.

Take eggnog, the rich, creamy, liquor-laced drink that is often a staple at every family gathering and office party. Couple it with well-marbled meats, side dishes drizzled with rich sauces and lots of alcohol and you have the recipe for heartburn.

That doesn't mean you should swear off your favorite foods on Christmas Eve.

"You can make trade-offs that let you have the best of both worlds," said Pat Baird, a registered dietitian in Greenwich, Connecticut.

If you know ahead of time the party you're attending will feature heartburn-triggering foods, snack beforehand and graze at the party, but avoid the fat plat-

ters. If there is a dessert buffet, choose a sliver of something sweet instead of trying them all.

Alcohol tends to worsen heartburn, so if you must drink, think about diluting your wine or beer with water or club soda, Baird said.

Heartburn is an irritating chest pain that starts at the breastbone and charges up the throat, heartburn can cause people to accidentally inhale regurgitated stomach acid.

Severe heartburn symptoms are sometimes confused with heart attacks, another holiday risk.

A study published in the journal Circulation earlier this month found that heart attacks and heart disease-related deaths tend to peak on Christmas, the day after, and New Year's Day. Researchers at the University of California at San Diego attributed the increase of cardiac deaths to people delaying medical treatment during the holidays.

People should make sure they know the difference between heartburn and heart attack symptoms and not automatically assume their chest pain is from overindulgence from food, said Dr. David Peura, chair of the Na-

tional Heartburn Alliance, who was not connected with the study.

Heartburn usually occurs after a meal. A heart attack is often activity-related. But if patients are unsure and their chest pain lasts for more than a few minutes, they should seek immediate medical attention.

The most common heartburn treatments are over-the-counter and prescription heartburn drugs. Pharmacies report a spike in the number of customers buying acid-blocking medications around the holidays, according to the National Community Pharmacists Association, which represents 25,000 independent pharmacies.

"What people do during the holidays is a perfect set-up to provoking heartburn," said Dr. Mel Wilcox, a spokesperson for the American Gastroenterological Association.

Overindulgence is not the only thing people should keep in mind in preventing holiday heartburn. Keeping stress levels low and exercising are also important. People should also avoid eating a few hours before bed and dozing right after dinner since stomach acid levels are higher after a meal and can migrate upward. AP

Biggest quake in 4 years harms no one

SYDNEY—The world's biggest earthquake in almost four years, measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale, struck off the coast of Australia's southern island state of Tasmania early Friday, but caused no damage or injury.

Seismological officials said it was felt throughout Tasmania and the South Island of New Zealand, but because it occurred at a depth of 10 km and far from inhabited land, it was barely noticed even by the scientists or penguins on nearby Macquarie Islands.

Geoscience Australia said the epicenter of the quake, which struck at 1:59 a.m., was 400 km off Macquarie Island and 800 km off the coast of Tasmania, about halfway between Australia and Antarctica.

Seismologist Cvetan Sinadinovski said it caused buildings to shake in the island state for up to 15 seconds, but did not cause a tsunami or unusual tidal activity because it was of horizontal rather than vertical displacement and struck far off the coast.

"If it happened underneath a population center in Australia, this would probably have destroyed a whole city," Sinadinovski said.

He described the quake as more than 30 times stronger than the earthquake that devastated the south-eastern Australian city of Newcastle in 1989, claiming 13 lives and injuring 160.

Friday's earthquake, which was initially registered as 7.8 on the Richter scale but later upgraded to 8.1, was the largest since one off the coast of Peru in early 2001, Sinadinovski said. AFP

Bomb attack kills 2 in Thai Muslim south

BANGKOK—Two people were killed and at least six others were injured Friday when a bomb hidden in a motorcycle exploded next to a bank in insurgency-hit southern Thailand, police said.

Two people are now dead. The second death was of a woman, and there are six injured, and I believe that most of them were bank customers," Sub-Lt. Anon Praditsaeng said from Sungai Kolok town where the blast occurred just after 9 a.m.

He said the bomb was planted in a motorcycle parked in front of an ATM machine beside the town's Siam Commercial Bank branch in Narathiwat, one of three southern provinces bearing the brunt of an Islamic separatist insurgency that has left more than 560 people dead this year.

Narathiwat's governor, Pracha Trairat, said an initial report on the blast noted one person had been killed and one of the wounded was in critical condition.

He said the blast was the work of Muslim separatists intent on exhibiting their continued capacity to strike in the south despite a recent crackdown on militancy that netted four suspects identified as masterminds of the violence.

"The bomb attack in Sungai Kolok was absolutely the work of separatist militants who are undergoing a tense psychological war with authorities and want to flex their muscles," Pracha said.

Police had yet to determine how the device was set off or what explosives were used. A forensics team had been dispatched to assess the scene. AFP

Whistleblower to enjoy first Christmas as a free man

JERUSALEM—After 18 years of spending Christmas within the four walls of an Israeli jail cell with nothing more than a television for company, Mordechai Vanunu is about to celebrate his first Christmas as a free man.

"For me, this is a very big Christmas. It's my first Christmas after 18 years in prison," says the nuclear whistleblower who was released in April after serving a lengthy prison term for leaking top-secret details about Israel's nuclear program to Britain's Sunday Times.

"In terms of my faith, it's the first time I'm celebrating a real

Christmas among friends. I hope this Christmas will be a new beginning for peace and non-violence, and for following the way of Jesus," he said.

Widely reviled as a traitor throughout Israel, Vanunu has also incurred the wrath of the Jewish public for converting to Christianity shortly before he was kidnapped and subsequently jailed in 1986.

"I was baptized in Sydney and a month after that, I was kidnapped, so I have never celebrated Christmas before."

Since his release on April 21, Vanunu has taken refuge in St.



VANUNU

George's Anglican cathedral in occupied east Jerusalem, where he is free to practice his faith.

For a man whose only link to Christmas has been watching the Bethlehem midnight mass on Arabic television in his prison cell, there is an almost childlike excitement in seeing the dazzling display of Christmas decorations at the plush American Colony hotel just down the road from the church.

"It's the first time I've ever seen a Christmas tree in real life," he admits with a grin.

"We're going to decorate the tree in the cathedral a week be-

fore Christmas and we're also planning to go to Bethlehem for midnight Mass," he says, while admitting it is unlikely he will get there given Israel's heavy restrictions on his movement.

"When I was in prison, I used to celebrate with tapes of Christmas music. People would send me thousands of Christmas cards and I would watch the midnight mass on Arabic television."

"From the start, my faith was very strong and I used it to protect myself from the Israeli psychological warfare," he said. "I survived in prison by proclaiming my faith." AFP

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Smuggling cools firecracker trade

BOCAUE, Bulacan—Pyrotechnic manufacturers in Bulacan, the country's firecracker capital, will not increase their prices to compete with low-priced firecrackers that are smuggled mostly from China and Taiwan.

Neptali Guballa, president of the Philippine Pyrotechnic Manufacturers and Dealers Association Inc. (PPMDAI), said smuggled firecrackers and pyrotechnic products worth at least P10 million are now sold in the country.

He said prices of smuggled products such as piccolo, pop-pop, trompito and double action have gone down from P30-P75 per box to P7-P9 per box.

Chinese businessmen from Malabon and Binondo were be-

hind the proliferation of smuggled firecrackers, he said.

He lamented that manufacturers here are losing their business because Filipinos have been buying imported firecrackers.

"If the government would not help us seize the illegal products, we will lose our source of income," he said.

Guballa said local manufacturers cannot lower their prices because of

the rising cost of raw materials they use in producing firecrackers.

In Lucena City, officials are planning to convert a vacant public cemetery as a market place for firecrackers to regulate their sale.

Councilor Rey Oliver Alejandro, chair of the council's committee on peace and order, said the local government should no longer allow the proliferation of firecrackers without regulation.

On Dec. 31 last year, at least 20 people were killed in a fire started by a firecracker in the city market.

Alejandro said the city government will no longer allow the selling of firecrackers and pyrotechnics on sidewalks and in stores in the city.

Firecracker vendors would be given space in the vacant cemetery. Families living there welcomed the proposal.

Authorities have been reminding people of the dangers of using firecrackers during revelries and sought a ban on these.

One of the most successful campaigns against firecrackers is found in Davao City, where Mayor Rodrigo Duterte continues to enforce a total ban on firecrackers. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

P33M in agri projects turned over to farmers

COTABATO CITY—Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap recently turned over two agricultural projects worth P33 million to coastal farmers of far-flung Lebak, Sultan Kudarat.

Abusama Alid, agriculture director for Central Mindanao, said Yap turned over a P10-M rice mill constructed by his office for the Sultan Kudarat Coastal Federation of Cooperatives.

The project was funded through a loan under the Agri-Business Equipment Leasing Program of the DA Livelihood Corp. which is payable in five years.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, the rice mill built in Barangay Barurao, has the capacity to mill two tons per hour and can benefit 2,000 farmers, according to Sally Rasalan, DA regional information officer.

Alid said the rice mill has an NFA-tested milling recovery of 66 to 68 percent for 11-month old paddy and 68-70 percent for newly harvested paddy.

"This is much higher than the industry average of 60-63 percent milling recovery," Alid said.

In Barangay Panso, also in Lebak, Yap turned over the P23-million Tran Communal Irrigation System to the Irrigators Association.

The project gets its water from the Pansud dam site in Lebak and services the villages of Puritay, Pansug, Taguisa, Tran and Barurao or about 1,000 hectares of rice fields.

The irrigation system is expected to benefit at least 715 farmers.

The World Bank, through the Mindanao Rural Development Program, financed the project which is payable in 27 years.

Speaking to farmers after the turn-over program, Yap stressed the government's commitment to help farmers increase production and profit and boost self-sufficiency in rice.

Sultan Kudarat is among the poorest provinces in the region but it is rich in natural resources. Lack of capital and government support in previous years made the land idle and its people poor. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



RESIDENTS of Infanta, Quezon trek with muddied feet to church to hear Mass.

Tragedy steals Xmas joy in Quezon towns hit by slides, floods

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

INFANTA, Quezon—Christmas is just another day for calamity-stricken northern Quezon, the environmental destruction and human tragedy mixing with the sound of Christmas carols and the lingering smell of death.

"Our Christmas now will just pass without a trace unlike in the past," said Yolanda Quinto, a housewife from Barangay Comon, Infanta.

"After that, we will just sleep and pretend the day was just an ordinary one."

She shovels mud in the family compound and her face is one of despair and helplessness.

"What we are praying for now is for the Lord to help us bring back our shattered lives. This is what we wish for Christmas," she said.

A bamboo bush behind her house stopped logs from destroying it, but she lost a source of income—a dry goods store in town.

"Even without the holiday food and the festive air, Christmas is still Christmas," she said.

The Dumagats of Sierra Madre do not celebrate Christmas.

"We don't need Christmas ... just to share to our fellow whatever we have," said Catalino Rutaguo, a tribal chieftain.

"But even if we wanted to, Christmas ... is now the least of our concern," he said.

"We cannot live on sardines

and noodles forever. We have to work and feed our people from the sweat of our labor to regain our dignity," he said.

A young Dumagat leader, Ramse Estuveda, thanked volunteers who gave him several packs of raw noodles, ingredients and bread, saying he would reserve the pack for a "special meal."

"We can rest our taste buds from the avalanche of sardines and noodles," he said.

In Real town, residents of Barangay Tiguan, which suffered heavy casualties in the landslides and floods, Christmas would be a very quiet one.

"We used to have nightly revelry during Christmas season. There were singing and dancing," said Mimi Escalante, whose house was only few meters from the collapsed Repador Building where an estimated 100 people died.

"There will be no more festivities," she said as she watched her husband dig for salvageable metal they could sell for cash.

"Come Christmas, I will light a candle in the collapsed building for ... all those who died there," she said.

It is the children in whom the Christmas spirit lives on.

They lined the highways with stretched hands singing Christmas carols.

The sound of their songs mix with the sound of diggings and sighs. "Thank you, thank you, thank you very much, thank you," the singing went.

DOJ files murder case vs cultist tagged in lawyer's slaying

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Department of Justice on Thursday filed a murder case against the alleged gunman in the killing of lawyer Arbet Sta. Ana Yongco before the regional trial court here.

The panel of senior state prosecutors found sufficient evidence to indict Michel Pavila after conducting a preliminary investigation.

In a resolution, the panel did not give weight to Pavila's alibi,

saying the witnesses of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) positively identified him as the one who shot and killed Yongco on Oct. 11 inside her office in Barangay Zapatera this city.

Pavila is detained at the Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center immediately after RTC executive Judge Simeon Dumdum issued a warrant for his arrest on Thursday afternoon.

Four witnesses, including a 10-year-old girl, identified Pavila as

the one who entered Yongco's office and shot her four times in the head, neck and cheeks.

Pavila is a member of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA) whose "supreme master," Ruben Ecleo Jr., stands trial for particide wherein the private prosecutor was Yongco.

Ecleo, who is accused of killing his wife Alona Bacolod-Ecleo in 2002, denied having a hand in the murder of Yongco.

Incidentally, Pavila is represented by lawyers Orlando Salazar and Giovanni Mata, who also serve as legal counsels of Ecleo.

Pavila said he was ready to face the charges because his conscience was clear.

Pavila said at the time Yongco was killed, he was in Barangay Talaga, Cagayancillo town in Palawan, attending a barangay assembly from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

To prove his allegation, he showed an attendance sheet, a Sangguniang Bayan resolution and affidavits of residents in the village, attesting that he was present in the assembly.

Witnesses also tagged Nestor Carrol, MSgt Heracleo Rallestar and Edgar Ardita as Pavila's companions in Yongco's killing.

Pavila said the case against him was designed to link Yongco's killing to the PBMA and its leader Ecleo.

He said the CIDG was "biased," "unfair" and "lacked credibility."

Supt. Salvador Manga, CIDG chief for Central Visayas, said the CIDG did a good job and was ready for the case.

Witnesses also tagged Nestor Carrol, MSgt Heracleo Rallestar and Edgar Ardita as Pavila's companions in Yongco's killing.

Boy, 5, latest meningo victim in Baguio City

BAGUIO CITY—Mayor Brailio Yaranon asked two senators to help the city government pay for a P1.5-million carbon dioxide incubator, which is a faster way to detect meningococemia.

The appeal came as the Department of Health here announced the death of a 5-year-old boy apparently from the fatal strain of meningitis.

Yaranon asked Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. and Sen. Jambay Madrigal to help defray the cost of the incubator and P1.3 worth of chemical reagents and laboratory equipment to help health officials detect meningococemia, which has killed 10 people here and in nearby La Trinidad, Benguet.

The latest victim was a boy who died of suspected meningococemia Monday night at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

Yaranon also sought more personnel for the City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (Cesu).

"The head of the Cesu for the past four years also happens to be the social hygiene physician of the Baguio health department. The other positions are filled by members of other departments," he said.

He said he wanted the Cesu to hire people with sufficient training in epidemiological surveillance and treatment.

The carbon dioxide incubator can hasten the detection of meningococemia by incubating plates of secretions from suspected cases and by detecting traces of the meningitis strain. *Frank Climati, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

MNC with Batangas tobacco plant welcomes 'sin' taxes

A MULTINATIONAL firm operating a multimillion-peso cigarette manufacturing factory in Batangas province expressed support for the new alcohol and cigarette excise tax law signed last night by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In a statement, Philip Morris Phils. Manufacturing Inc. (PMPMI) said the new law was a welcome development for the tobacco industry.

"We congratulate the President for displaying deft statesmanship and political will in enacting a law that sets a new tax structure for our products," the statement said.

"This is a law that strikes a balance between the fiscal needs of the government and the viability of the industry it wants to tax more," the statement quoted PMPMI managing director Chris Nelson as saying. "As the second largest mar-

ket player in the Philippines, PMPMI is prepared to assume its appropriate tax burden under the new law," Nelson said.

"Philip Morris is proud to be able to contribute in solving the fiscal problems of the government while be in a position to provide jobs to Filipino workers and livelihood to the hundreds of thousands dependent on the tobacco industry," he said.

PMPMI operates one of the largest cigarette factories in Asia in Batangas.

Nelson said the new tax law addresses the need of government for a steady stream of revenues for seven years while ensuring the viability of the tobacco industry in the country.

"Philip Morris is confident international credit ratings agencies would appreciate the hard work done by the Philippine government...," Nelson said.

ANNUAL TREK Fewer tribesmen begging in Calapan

CALAPAN CITY—In previous years, Mangyans from the Bangon and the Buhid tribes would flock to the city at the start of the holidays. But, curiously, not this time.

"I just saw one Mangyan this morning when there used to be plenty of them in the past, with their children," said Gie Morales, church secretary.

"We really don't know, maybe they transferred location," she added.

Yawanay Giayan, acting chair of a provincewide Mangyan organization, said many Mangyans would usually enter the city.

"Maybe some went to Manila, others in Puerto Galera, Baco and San Teodoro, thinking that there are more gifts there," said Giayan, another Mangyan.

He advised people not to give Christmas gifts to the Mangyans so that they would not be used to it. "But we can't blame our soft-

hearted provincemates, so it's hard to eliminate this practice," said Giayan.

Giayan, however, said it was a misconception that all Mangyans ask for gifts on Christmas.

Only the Bangon and the Buhid tribes do, he said.

Elder residents interviewed by the INQUIRER gave some possible reasons for the absence of Mangyans in this city this Christmas.

They said those affected by Typhoon "Unding" might have remained in their areas while others might have feared misfortunes like diseases due to change in climate and exposure to dust.

Still, others attributed it to the increased awareness of the negative effects of begging on their dignity.

"Maybe some fear (they would) experience what happened to a Bangon while crossing a street in Batangas and the death of another in jail after they were

taken in for begging," said Joy Bae, administrative officer of the Mangyan Mission.

Reports reached Bae that a Mangyan got sick in Calapan and contaminated his community when he returned home.

"We really tell our fellow Mangyans to stay in their land and develop it instead of asking from people, which results in their being looked down on," she said.

She said about 50 Mangyans spent the night in their office.

"They said each of them had a different experience. Some got a minimum of P500 as gifts. Some said they were not begging but selling orchids and other products."

Some Buhid leaders resorted to soliciting gifts that were distributed in Mangyan areas.

"We are still looking for other strategies," a tribe leader said. *Madonna T. Virala, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

INQUIRER *Visayas*Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

Ex-rebel wages chicken revolution

By Chito A. Fuentes
Tagbilaran City

"I WANT there to be no peasant in my realm so poor that he will not have a chicken in his pot every Sunday."

—King Henry IV of France, 1589-1610

A MAN who once fought in a Maoist campaign seeking to overthrow the government is now waging a silent revolution, espousing free-range chicken (not confined in cages).

It is not that Rubin Balistoy, 54, has suddenly chickened out after more than two decades of active involvement in the underground movement. He is simply enamored with the livelihood potential of Sasso chickens from France.

Sasso is an acronym for Selectiones d' Avecole dela Sartre et Sud Ouest or Selections from Sartre, France and Southwest. It was adopted as a trade name by a cooperative of native chicken growers in France.

Like most people who experienced life on the run, Balistoy is uncomfortable talking about his past in the underground, save for a few details. He once spent 10 months in a detention cell in Cebu but managed to escape when he learned he was due for shipment to Bicutan.

Like many young people who were incensed at the widening gap between the few filthy rich and the swelling ranks of the *masa*, Balistoy decided to offer his life to the revolution and was deployed to Samar, like many of the leading communist cadres at the time.

There, Balistoy made a name for himself, as claimed by military intelligence operatives, and was alleged to have been the leading cadre in Samar. Military sources claimed Balistoy was, at the very least, an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

This was the reason Balistoy's face, or at least what he was supposed to look like, appeared in posters of the country's most wanted CPP and New People's Army guerrillas, alongside with prominent communist leaders like Jose Ma. Sison, the late Rolito Kintanar and Rodolfo Salas.

'Chicken advocacy'

In 1992, Balistoy quietly came in from the cold and returned to Bohol. Although still active in advocacy groups, he is no longer identified with cause-

oriented and militant groups.

While he keeps abreast with political developments, Balistoy is now more inclined toward livelihood programs, such as the Free Range Chicken Advocates (Freerca), which he founded, and the Bohol Initiators for Sustainable Agriculture and Development Inc. of which he is president.

Balistoy operates Purple Life Farms (PLF) in Taloto, Tagbilaran City, which started as a pilot farm on free-range chicken production in April 1999, aimed at firming up the viability of the enterprise.

PLF also sought to gain experience and achieve enough capability toward full commercial production.

"The plan was to start with a flock of 50 native brood hens and five brood cocks, but this did not materialize due to scarcity of good-quality native pullets and imported cockerels," he recalled.

Balistoy explained that six months after PLF was founded, it discovered that its breeding target of 50 hens and five cocks was not enough.

"To be commercially viable, at least 200 brood hens and 20 cocks are needed," he added.

PLF got some Taiwan Yellow, White Cornish, Barred Plymouth Rock, Black Australorp and Jersey Giant chickens from the Department of Agriculture breeding station in Cebu. By November that year, it bought 180 hatching eggs of Sasso chicken from A.P. Inocencio Farms.

"From experience, the Sasso breed approximates the qualities of native chicken, that is, resistant to diseases, hardiness and adaptability to our climatic condition," Balistoy said.

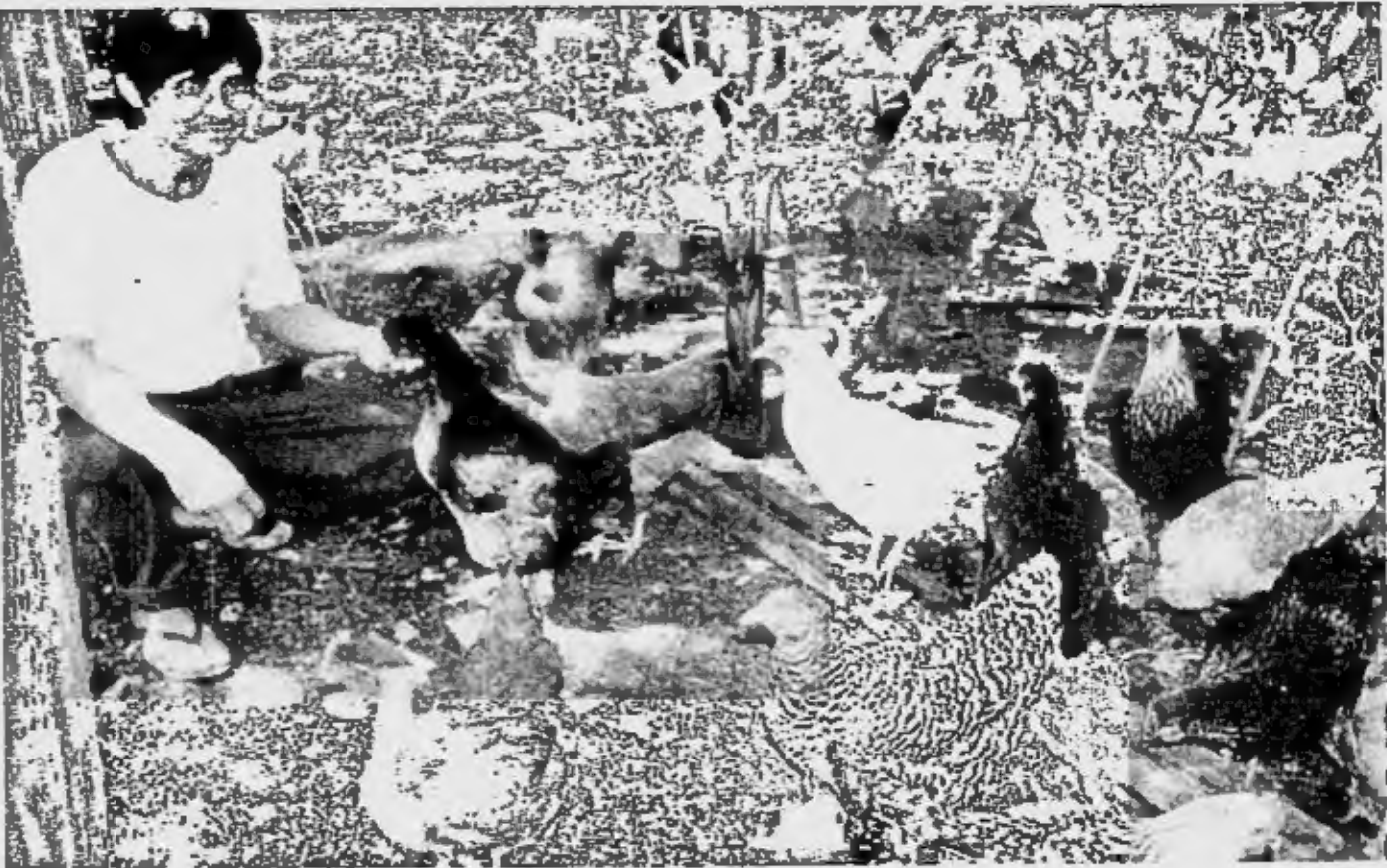
No fish meal

He explained that, in addition to their diet of green grass and insects, the free-range chickens were given a daily ration of feed mash that contained no artificial growth promoters, hormones and antibiotics.

"Animal-based protein, such as fish meal, bone and meat meal, dried skimmed milk and feather meal are not included in the feed mash," Balistoy stressed.

He revealed that fish meal was known to cause "fishy taste" in poultry meat and was a potential source of salmonella contamination, "while the others can cause tremors in the nerves with the advent of the mad cow disease in Europe and the avian flu outbreaks in Hong Kong."

In February 2000, PLF sponsored a management training program on Sasso chicken growing in Tagbilaran. It was at this time when Freerca was con-



RUBIN Balistoy enjoys feeding his Sasso chickens in his Tagbilaran farm.

CHITO A. FUENTES, PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

ceptualized.

"The idea was to start with an informal association with those who actually raise, are planning to [raise], or are just simply advocating free-range chickens," Balistoy said.

He said the idea caught fire and described free-range chicken production as "a new enterprise with enormous potential."

By 2001, PLF ceased to be a pilot farm and established itself as a business enterprise. It now serves as a model in free-range chicken production and enterprise building.

Balistoy said the demand for Sasso day-old chicks and broiler meat grew. Soon, free-range chicken table egg production started.

"Theoretical knowledge on intensive poultry production, in general, and Sasso production, in particular, gained new dimension with the timely exposure at Viv Asia, an international trade fair on intensive animal production and processing, as well as the Sasso customers' meeting in Bangkok," Balistoy noted.

No love at first sight

It seems like a curious love affair between the domestic fowl and the one-time cadre who confessed it was not

love at first sight between him and the feathery creatures.

"When I was a boy, I was traumatized by an angry hen which flapped its wings at me while protecting its young," Balistoy recalled with a laugh.

When he was growing up, however, he felt obligated to help his mother who was engaged in the chicken buy-and-sell business. Soon, he developed a fondness for chickens—enough for him to conceptualize PLF after his days in the jungles.

King Henry IV of France wanted prosperity for all, at least enough money in every household to put food on the table. He might have failed in this noble dream, but at least he succeeded in popularizing a cliché that is widely used to this day: "A chicken in every pot."

About four centuries since he ruled France, a Boholano is advocating an innovative livelihood program that, in a way, hopes to put a chicken in every pot. And it is not just any chicken. It is Sasso chicken from the France of King Henry IV.

If the Sasso and the livelihood movement in Bohol succeed in alleviating the plight of the present-day commoners of Bohol, it will be one development pleasing to the king. For Balistoy, however, this is one revolution worth dedicating his life to.

Bayawan marks cityhood with agri fair

By Alex V. Pal
Bayawan City

TWO THINGS keep Bayawan City in Negros Oriental alive—rice and the tawo-tawo (scarecrow).

No one seems to remember exactly when it started, but even before it attained cityhood in 2000, Bayawan had already made a name for itself as the rice granary of the province. Rice production is what mainly keeps this city of 105,000 people alive, save for some hectares planted to sugarcane and other cash crops.

So when the city celebrated its charter anniversary on Dec. 23, it feasted on the baye-baye (rice cake) and remembered the hum-

ble role of the tawo-tawo during a festival.

It was one of the few times of the year that the scarecrows came alive through the beat and performances of some of Negros Oriental's best dancers who had won national awards in street dancing.

On Dec. 6, the tawo-tawo dancers hit the streets to the tune of a bigger beat. In fact, everyone turned out to witness the big event, the plans for which they had so frequently heard about the past few months—the National Agro Trade Fair and Congress.

First time

The five-day fair was held in what was once a rice field in Barangay Vilalac, which the city plans to transform into a bus terminal.

It was the first time that

Bayawan held this event, which had the full support of the provincial government and the regional offices of the Department of Agriculture, and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council. The city government, headed by Mayor German E. Sarana Jr., spent P2 million for this activity.

"We want to position ourselves as the agriculture center of Region 7 and help our farmers learn modern techniques in raising cash crops," said Vice Mayor Rene Gaudiel.

Through this activity, he said, the city hoped to broaden the horizons of its farmers and be able to make full use of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Strong Republic Nautical Highway to freely transport farm products and other goods to Metro Manila.

Bayawan has also been working to improve a highway that will cut through the mountains to its sister city, Kabankalan, in Negros Occidental.

GMA praise

These efforts did not go unnoticed. The President, who graced the formal opening of the trade fair on Dec. 7, praised Bayawan for being "a model for food security and agricultural production."

In her speech, she also noted that the city had allocated P5.8 million to support farmers who wanted to plant rice and other crops aside from sugarcane in the 70,000 hectares of agricultural land.

In fact, she added, Bayawan could turn the newly inaugurated 121-km Dumaguete-Siaton-Basay road into a "tuna highway" as its fishermen catch a lot of yellow-fin tuna.

After turning over four rice threshers and four corn shellers to farmer groups in the city and the towns of Siaton, Sta. Catalina and Basay, the President instructed Land Bank President Margarito Teves to allocate more funds for the country's agri-fishery program.

The other highlights of the fair were a rodeo competition and contests on fresh milk drinking, piglet catching, wood chopping, load carrying, cock *carambola*, bull riding, whip cracking, roping, banca race and fishing.

Lectures and demonstrations were held on such topics as meat processing, management of vegetable pests, production of essential oils and hybrid rice, the effects of aflatoxin on corn, market access, investment and tariff barriers, and a cold chain system for fruits and vegetables.



THE TAWO-TAWO dancers of Bayawan City, national awarders for the street dancing competition, now have a new reason to dance with the holding of the National Agricultural Trade Fair and Congress. ALEX V. PAL, PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

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Can you hear it?

IN A TIME of lingering anguish and sudden loss, Christmas comes almost like an irrelevance. After the tempest of a divisive and long drawn-out election year, after the sorrow of unexpected death (those of entire communities, that of a popular Filipino icon), the longed-for day arrives looking like a lesser thing.

There is little relief, and less gaiety. Even the rich are burdened by a sense that the time is not ripe for a celebration.

But it is in times like these, when we seem to encounter the mysteries of Lent in the middle of Christmas, that Christians actually come closest to the true meaning—that is to say, religious rather than commercial—of the season.

In his Christmas message, Archbishop of Manila Gaudencio Rosales reminded us of an obscure but crucial axiom of the faith: "Christmas is whispering to us even in the darkness and after the tempest and sorrow are gone."

Indeed, to the Christian believer, the whispering happens even when the tempest is still howling, when the sorrow still runs deep.

Can you hear it?

Our response will be revealing, not for what it says about Christmas, but in fact for what it says about ourselves.

Loud and clear

TO MARY, the wearying return to Bethlehem for the imperial census must have seemed a less-than-happy time to give birth to the promised Savior of the human race. The inhospitable innkeepers must have seemed like more sorry examples of the race to be saved. And the terrified shepherds visiting "a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" must have seemed yet another reminder of the poverty that was all around her.

But it was Mary's gift—as it was the gift of the other two central figures of the first Christian season of Advent, the prophet Isaiah and John the baptizer—to see beyond appearances. In the literal darkness, in the midst of the homecoming tempest and the sorrow and pain of childbirth, she heard Christmas loud and clear. Playing host to a flock of shepherds so soon after giving birth, Mary yet received their astonishing angel-babble with grace. "As for Mary," the evangelist Luke recalls, "she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them."

It is Mary's love for her Son that puts everything in perspective: the untimely pregnancy, the unwanted traveling, the jostling crowd, the fear of losing the Baby, the make-shift delivery room, the surprise, perhaps even unwelcome visitors. In the Nativity experience, she foreshadowed the essential teaching of her crucified Son. Love's sacrifice is redemptive.

This lesson is even more relevant to us today, when millions of Filipinos seem plunged in gloom or deep in the throes of suffering. The Manila archbishop, in his message to the faithful, suggests something we already know all too well: Grace comes even or especially from the afflicted, if they allow themselves to turn their affliction into love's willing sacrifice. "These people who have been touched by God's love in Jesus are capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man. Only love is capable of radically transforming the relationship that men maintain among themselves."

"Touched by God's love in Jesus." This subtle phrase suggests what theologians call the economy of salvation. If we are in pain, and we offer our pain as a sacrifice of love (that is, as part of Christ's own suffering), our suffering redeems us, gives meaning to our lives, and ultimately saves us. This is the heart of the Christian faith. We are touched by God's love in Jesus to the degree we share in his self-sacrifice.

This is, thus, what Christmas is whispering to us amid the gathering darkness, in the middle of our tempest and our sorrow: Even in affliction, there is yet hope.



Merry Christmas to one and all!

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year but it is an event that should be celebrated every day. This is not an original thought, to be sure, but it is something worth repeating to remind us of the eternal message of the Star of Bethlehem. Dutifully remembered on this day by the faithful, it is soon forgotten with the dismantling of the festive lights.

The birth of the Infant Child was originally regarded by the Christian world as a spiritual reawakening to the righteousness that God expected of His mortal creatures. Peace on earth and goodwill to all men (and women and children too) was the lesson His Son had come down to this world to teach its sinners. Quietly proclaimed in the Holy Manger, it was to be scorned in the hill on Calvary but resurrected with the risen Lord. That lesson has yet to be fully learned.

Today, regrettably, the true meaning of Christmas has been debased with the crass of commercialism and the profit motive. It has become the quasi-religious excuse for the reverence of money as the new god of a congregation grown materialistic. Gift-giving has ceased to be the sincere manifestation of love, affection, loyalty, gratitude and goodwill to persons of simple grace. To many, it has become the expected and sometimes even demanded exhibition of reluctant tribute or plain bribery for questionable concessions.

O Christmas, O Christmas, to vary the doomed Madame Roland's lament of liberty, how many crimes are committed in thy name! How many sins are concealed behind the façade of generosity and joy that the day projects.

The law prohibits the gifting of public officials with expensive presents as compulsory compensation for past favors or hopeful inducements for future benefits. These are not allowed the whole year round but the Yuletide may be used as a convenient excuse for such selfish magnanimity.

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

Simple tokens of thoughtfulness are allowed to express the merriment of the season but not as gratitude money paid to the corrupt in hopes of their continued depravity. Baskets of fruits and canned goods, while innocent-looking enough, may conceal sinister efforts in the guise of generosity to poison integrity and weaken the will.

Gifts abound during this season of giving, but are they given from the heart as the true spirit of Christmas commands? The wallet can be a source of goodies but not of goodness. Lavish gifts—of cash, jewelry, foreign travels, cars, house and lots, and other bestowals from the rich—can provide immense pleasure to those who do not need it. But they become bitter taunts to those who beg for the bare necessities of life like food for their empty bellies, medicines to heal their wounds, clothes for their bare bodies, a humble abode in the crowded slums.

Happily, these somber thoughts do not enervate the true meaning of Christmas for the majority of our people even in these cynical times. There are still many of us who, regardless of age, believe in Santa Claus, of reindeer racing with the wind, of a reformed Ghost of Christmas Future with Scrooge no longer a spoilsport tightwad but an open-handed giver.

It is the children who are the true believers in Christmas. They still believe in the blessings of gold, frankincense and myrrh that the Wise Men gave the new-born Babe. And the happy thought is that many of us are still children like

them, though the years may have wrinkled our skin but not our spirits. Like them, we believe that Santa Claus continues to dwell in the recesses of our faith and makes us not mere heedless hedonists but caring human beings.

Caring for the plight of others is one of the virtues of our race, and we are again proving it during these desperate days. Many Filipinos, from all walks of life, including those with little to spare for themselves and their families, are showing this with acts of charity and selflessness for the benefit of the victims of the disasters that have left them homeless but not hopeless. The typhoons may have deprived them of their belongings but not of their friends with their helping hands.

The men and women who grieve for their stricken fellow human beings believe that the unfortunates among us also deserve, as we all do, to enjoy the delights of Christmas as the birthday of the Lord. That is why many of them have decided to do away with their usual Christmas parties, or at least lessen the former extravagance, and instead donate what they will be saving from this frugality to the needy families in the typhoon areas.

This is a sacrifice that beggars the decision of the members of the House of Representatives to reduce their pork barrel allowances that, in fact, should be given entirely to the disaster victims. This altruism is in sharp contrast with the cupidity, the unconscionable cupidity, of the so-called representatives of the people.

Sorry if I may have dampened your enjoyment of this loveliest feast of Christendom, as it is described in today's homilies. Have I preached a sermon too? I apologize if I have, but my intention was to describe what I think is the real meaning of Christmas as it was proclaimed 2,000 years ago. It is to share one's blessings with others, especially the less blessed among us.

A Merry Christmas to one and all!

Faith and hope

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

we done to deserve this?" The bewilderment is even greater when this happens close to Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, God With Us, and are reminded that "Nothing is impossible with God." It is as if our beliefs and our faith are being mocked. And since no satisfactory answer is immediately forthcoming, our faith is shaken and reproach or rage follows against an all-powerful God who would desert us in our time of need. How many people have made *tanpo* (I don't know the exact English equivalent), or worse, have turned away permanently from God, crushed with disappointment and despair?

I confess to having been a hair's-breadth away from this despair and disappointment—and I am not even directly affected by these events. With everything coming within days of Christmas, it seemed that the Christmas spirit—the sense of hope, of peace, of being held in God's Hand—would elude me.

What saved me from going over the edge? Mainly, the Simbang Gabi, going to which, I find out, is not so much a sacrifice as an opportunity to touch base with our fundamental values. The reflections from the readings and the Gospel stories, the early morning walks to church help to set everything straight. One realizes that to be the recipient of God's love and favor, to obey Him unconditionally, does not entitle one to a bed of thornless roses. Just ask Mary, suffering from the social exclusion from being unwed and pregnant, or watching her Son being put through the slow, agonizing death that was the punishment of a criminal. Just ask God's only begotten Son, who went

through the agony of anticipating what was to come, and the pain and humiliation of scourging and crucifixion. How can we expect better treatment, and then get mad when it doesn't come?

Or look at it from another point of view: He works through people (a face-to-face encounter with Him in life is not in the cards—even Mary got her message from an angel), and He gives us the gift of free will. There is the story of Pedro, who drowned in a flood after he had refused the offer of a truck, then a banca, then a helicopter, as flood waters rose, because he was certain that God would not let him die. When he arrived in heaven, he reproached God for abandoning him, and God exclaimed, "Who do you think sent you the truck, the boat, and the helicopter?"

Or consider that people die in mudslides and landslides because other people exploit the land mercilessly; people live in poverty and misery, because other people appropriate for themselves what should have been conserved or used to benefit the poor. In other words, we do it to ourselves. So why reproach God?

The bottom line, folks, is put very well by Lutheran pastor Mary W. Anderson:

"The Christmas story is nothing like the Disney fairy tales where all your self-centered dreams come true. No rags-to-riches. No happily-ever-after that the world would understand."

"Taking the Christ Child into our hearts does not guarantee our cancer will be cured, our jobs will be secure or our children will all be above average. We aren't wishing upon a star. We're being led by one. And that makes all the difference in how we understand our lives."

"Putting yourself in God's hands means trusting in the promise that God will work all things for good in God's way, in God's time, in God's economy. It does not mean we will always understand what is happening in us, through us, to us—or why."

A joyous, hopeful Christmas to all.

The Last Angel

POLITICAL
TIDBITSBelinda
Olivares-Gunanan

A VERY Merry Christmas to all my readers! May the Peace of the Christ Child whose birth we commemorate today descend on all of us. May you all have many blessings from the Christ Child in this season of grace.

The year about to end has brought some tragedy to many people whether in their personal lives or as a nation, so that in this season, perhaps we need to have more stories that uplift the spirit. One such story I read was courtesy of the *Annals of the Rotary Club of Makati*, who were giving out copies at their Christmas bazaar last month. The *Annals* had put up a Christmas tree with little envelopes as trimmings, and as I passed in front of the tree, a friend, Chinit Delgado-Rufino, called me and gave me one. I thought it would make a perfect Christmas story for my readers. Enjoy this story of the "Last Angel" by Charles Sparenberger:

"Leaving O'Hare Airport last December, I was seated beside a smiling woman in her early 60s. She was bound for Denver and I for San Francisco. Smartly dressed, she was holding the most beautiful angel doll I have ever seen. It was the perfect conversation opener, and by the time we reached her destination, I had enjoyed the most unusual story. Let me share it with you.

"Each Christmas, she told me, a department store in Chicago puts up an angel tree, a Christmas tree decorated with nothing but hundreds of white paper angels. On each of the angel the store has printed the first name and age of an unprivileged youngster in need of a remembrance of Christmas.

"Customers choose an angel, purchase an appropriate gift anywhere they wish, and return it to the store for free gift-wrapping and delivery on Christmas Eve. This woman noticed the tree a dozen times when shopping there, and each time she made a mental note to select a child's name; but as so often happens, she just never got round to it.

"Then on Christmas Eve one year, she returned to the store to find a last-minute gift. And there stood the tree, now bare. Well, not quite, for above her line of vision, toward the back of the

tree, was the last angel. She stood on tiptoe, removed it, and read: "Cyndi, 3." Unless she moved swiftly, this child would not have a Christmas present this year.

"Hurrying to a nearby toy store, she bought an angel doll, the last in store and returned, only to learn that, although the clerk would gladly gift-wrap the toy, it was too late to have it delivered. But the clerk gave her the child's address, and she was soon on her way across town to deliver the present.

"As she approached the neighborhood she sought, the woman noticed the houses were increasingly dilapidated. The address proved to be a one-room shack in the rear of the last house on a dead-end street. Walking up the sidewalk, she noticed that no one had made tracks in the previous night's snowfall. She knocked on the broken door and waited, but there was not a sound from within.

"Knocking again, she heard a child begin to cry. The force of her knock had pushed the door ajar, and she saw a child—soiled and dirty—standing beside an unmade bed. A single light bulb, hanging from the ceiling, dimly lit the cold, bare room.

"The pathetic sight compelled her to enter, and there on the floor behind the table, lay a woman. She bent down and realized in an instant that the woman was dead. She panicked.

"Her first thought was to close the door and run...but someone might have seen her enter the shack. And the clerk in the department store knew she was delivering the gift. So the woman unwrapped the doll, and she gave it to the child, who

cuddled it and stopped crying. Then she ran down the block to a grocery store and called the police.

"They arrived shortly; the officers estimated that the child's mother had been dead more than eight hours. While the woman comforted the child, the officers discussed what agencies should be contacted, and whether a place could be found for the little girl to stay this late on Christmas Eve.

"Suddenly the woman had an idea. Why not take the child home? In arguing her case, she was so persuasive the officers agreed to cut the red tape and arrange for her to have temporary custody for the holiday weekend.

"It proved to be the most wonderful Christmas she and her husband ever had. They had no children and their families lived out of state; they were planning to spend Christmas alone.

"Late Monday a social worker arrived and reported that the authorities had been unable to discover who the child was. There was nothing in the shack or on the woman's person to identify her. None of the neighbors had ever talked to the child or her mother in the two months they had lived there.

"My new friend's prayers were answered when the social worker agreed to let her keep the child while the search for relatives continued. A year later the woman and her husband adopted Cyndi, who by then had become the focus of their lives.

"As we sat together and talked, the woman told me that today Cyndi was grown up and happily married, with a three-year-old daughter of her own, who was also named Cyndi. The woman, now a widow, was flying to spend Christmas with them in Denver. She was bringing the angel doll for her granddaughter; it had been the last one in the store."

The moral of the story, it's obvious, is that any good one does for one's fellow man redounds to one's self. It should be pointed out that the *Annals of the Rotary Club of Makati* have decided to continue the "Last Angel" Project for underprivileged children from several impoverished barangays in Makati.

Christmas hopes

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



SHORTLY before my sister Neneng passed away last July, her daughter Dada, who is based in Seattle, found out she was pregnant. This indeed was happy news, for Dada and her husband Todd had been trying for years to get pregnant. But the good tidings were tempered by the news about her mother. Dada was due for her first visit to an obstetrician when she was summoned to her mother's side here. Fortunately, her sister Fani is an ob-gyn, and so took it upon herself to monitor Dada's condition, diet and activity while they were here.

Fani, on the other hand, was still, technically a "honeymooner" with her husband Jonathan, having gotten married in Arizona just last May. Since they are both in their mid-30s, and Jonathan is an American, we didn't want to put any undue pressure on them and so refrained from nagging them about any plans for a child, as we would no doubt have done with home-based and younger newlyweds.

At the memorial service for Neneng, Dada read a letter to her unborn child, calling the baby "Babykakes," which was her mother's own pet name for her. A wave of sadness and regret washed over me at that moment, realizing that Neneng would no longer be around to see her daughters' children. Knowing Neneng, and how she banked for the company of her apas by her sons Rommel and Dennis, I was sure she would have savored being with Fani's and Dada's kids. There's a Filipino saying that goes: "When your son gets married, you lose him to his new family, but a daughter is yours forever."

Just recently, Jonathan sent all of us an e-mail note announcing that Fani was pregnant. There was rejoicing all around. With Dada due to give birth around the first quarter of 2005, and Fani due in July, our extended family suddenly has a bumper crop of babies!

There's a local superstition that when an older person dies, a baby will soon be born to take his or her place. This gives us, Neneng's family, a measure of comfort. Neneng lived life in such a big way that, we like to think, it will take two new people to fill up the void she has left.

MY own "family of choice," a group of women I

have known since college, is also undergoing a life-changing phase. Poti, son of my good friend Sandra Puno, is getting married in January. Poti and his bride-to-be Trisha have been generous enough to include Sandra's friends in the guest list. We have even been invited to the bridal shower! (I wonder, though, if they realize what sort of hussies we turn into once a little alcohol enters our systems!)

Poti is the first offspring of the "Media Girls" to tie the knot. And if knot-tying is taking place, can nappy changing be far behind? The thought fills us with anticipation, though what sort of "Sex and the City" grandmotherly gals we will be is a thought too provocative, or pathetic, to contemplate.

To a woman, we—Sandra, Peachy Yamsuan, Jess de la Cruz and I—have declared that we are ready for grandchildren. I remember environmentalist and iconoclast Odette Alcantara declaring that had she known how much fun having grandchildren would be, she would have gone straight to having them and not bothered with having and raising her children. Well, we did and do enjoy our own children, and don't regret a whole lot the hassles they put us through, but the collective feeling is that we've done well enough by them and it's time they reward us with the fringe benefits promised us.

Meantime, even as we contemplate grandchildren on the horizon, our friend in San Francisco, Maloy Ramos Baralro, is struggling with day-care and child-care issues with her son Vince, who is precocious and truly precious. Come to think of it, Vince might well be the key to all our apas, and that way Maloy would

have her revenge for all the ribbing we put her through.

There is another "media girl" in Los Angeles, Emma Conco, who of all of us has the biggest right to liken herself to the "S&C" dames, being single. To her credit, she is the most conscientious of ninangs, and may in fact prove to be the best "mother" of us all.

ANOTHER death that stunned with its fierce suddenness (as if any death were timely!), before FPJ's and that of KC de Venecia, was Arbet Sta. Ana Yongco's. Arbet, if you remember, was shot dead in her home last October by a suspected hit man.

I had met her only once before, but she immediately imprinted herself on my memory with her energy and passion. Not all the pictures and video tributes her friends and family in Cebu have prepared for her could quite capture her undeniable presence, which lit up any room she was in.

Maybe that's why in the midst of their mourning and monitoring the investigation of her murder, all those who worked with Arbet are determined to keep her memory alive and honor her life in meaningful ways.

Last Dec. 9, her birthday, Arbet's friends and supporters held the launching and blessing of the Atty. Arbet Sta. Ana-Yongco Family and Community Wellness Center (ASY-PCWC) in Barangay Zaperera, Silatuna Street, Cebu City. The next day, her colleagues in the Legal Alternatives for Women Center Inc. (LAW Inc.), of which Arbet was an officer, launched the Atty. Arbet Sta. Ana-Yongco Scholarship Grant for Alternative Lawyering. Indeed, Arbet, who took on what most other lawyers in Cebu considered "hopeless" cases, exemplified the bravery and dedication demanded of an "alternative" lawyer.

To find meaning in a friend's death, and realize that life consists of phases, and earthly life itself is simply a preparation for eternal life. To see that while some doors close, new doors will open and reveal secrets yet to be held. And that even as we sigh with relief and bid an emotionally draining year farewell, a new year dawns and holds out the promise of beginnings. Merry Christmas, dear readers!

Who named these guys Wise Men?

SENSE AND
SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper



(Probably feeling sorry for the readers of this column since all past articles have just been too, too morbid, my niece thoughtfully decided to send in a "Christmas" article by Dave Barry from *The Miami Herald*. Hopefully it will bring a chuckle—or two—to those who will recognize themselves.)

"CHRISTMASTIME is a festive time—a time of parties and presents and songs that we all love, except for 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer,' which I for one got tired of in approximately 1958, and which now causes me to dislocate my forefinger stabbing the car-radio button. I prefer traditional Christmas carols, such as 'Ding Dong Merrily on High.' I am not making this carol up. The lyrics are: 'Ding dong merrily on high! (Something something something)'

"I don't know the rest, because I never got past the first line without cracking up. (BH: That's men for you; I don't know of many women who'd have the same reaction.) This song used to absolutely slay me and my boyfriend friends when we sang it in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Armonk, NY. And no wonder: It is a well-known axiom of music, discovered in 1783 by Mozart (this was Herb Mozart), that 'there is no such thing as a bad song that has 'ding dong' in the title.' Other examples are 'Ding Dong the Witch is Dead' and 'Shama Lama Ding Dong,' which is not to be confused with 'Rama Lama Ding Dong,' also an excellent song. (BH: See, what did I tell you about their sense of humor?)

"But getting back to Christmas: My point is that, although this is a festive time of year, it can also be a difficult and stressful time for a certain group—a group whose needs, all too often, are overlooked in our society. That group is: men. (BH: Not sure if this applies to us. We have a matriarchal society masquerading as a macho one, so there's a lot of pretense.)

"Why is the Christmas season so hard on men? There are many complex reasons, by which I mean: women. (Doesn't this remind you of Adam excusing himself to God?)

"This problem dates back to the very first Christmas. We know from the Bible that the Wise Men showed up in Bethlehem and gave the Baby Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Now, gold is always a nice gift, but frankincense and myrrh—at least according to my dictionary—are gum resins. Who gives gum resins to a baby?

"The answer is: men. The Wise Men, being men, didn't even START shopping for gifts until the last minute, when most of the stores in the greater Bethlehem area were closed for Christmas Eve. The only place still open was Big Stu's House of Myrrh.

"So the Wise Men showed up at the manger, handed their baby gifts to Mary, and headed for the egg nog. Mary looked at the gifts—which were not wrapped, nor were they accompanied by cards—rolled her eyes, tossed the gum resins to the goats (who ate them) and said: 'Next Christmas, we are going to have some gift-giving rules.'

"But the Wise Men didn't hear her, because by then they were over by the crib trying to teach the Baby Jesus to pull their finger.

"This is basically how things stand today. At this point in the Christmas season, your standard woman has already purchased and wrapped

thoughtful gifts for approximately 600 people, including her children, her relatives, her friends, her husband's relatives, her co-workers, the children of her friends, relatives of children of her friends, co-workers of friends of her relatives, husbands of her co-workers' relatives' friends, etc. She has also purchased several thoughtful gifts for nobody in particular, so she will not be in the horrifying position of receiving a gift from somebody for whom she does not have a retaliation gift.

"In contrast, your standard man, at this point in the Christmas season, has purchased zero gifts. He has not yet gotten around to purchasing an acceptable gift for his wife for LAST Christmas. He did give her something last year, but he could tell by her reaction to it that she had not been dreaming of getting an auto emergency kit, even though it was the deluxe model with booster cables and an air compressor. Clearly this gift violated an important rule, but the man had no idea what this rule was, and his wife was too upset to tell him.

"And now ANOTHER Christmas is looming, and this man, terrified that he will screw up again, has been wracking his brain for gift ideas for his wife. Nothing automotive this time: He won't make THAT mistake again! He's thinking Weed Whacker.

"But he's not sure. He's a nervous wreck. A lot of us men are. That's why we buy gifts at the very last minute, or, optionally, never. It's not that we're thoughtless jerks! Well, OK, thoughtless. But not jerks! We're doing our best to get through a stressful season. So on behalf of all men, I ask all you women to cut us some slack; and accept us for the imperfect beings that we are compared to you; and above all, in the spirit of another great Christmas carol, bring us some figgy pudding."

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Christmas changes

I USED to wonder what the fuss with Christmas was all about.

I'm quite cynical already even at my young age. I don't understand why news anchors and radio deejays excitedly make a countdown to Christmas. I cringe when the radio plays those cheesy Christmas songs and frown as I watch our neighbors put up the biggest and brightest Christmas lights on their front gates while their kids stand to one side, hooting excitedly. I concur silently yet vigorously, when I overhear world-weary people mutter, "Pambata lang ang Pasko." I smirk as I watch my little cousins hang their socks with their gift lists on the wall and badger my aunts and uncles as to when Santa would finally come.

I don't understand especially why people start anticipating Christmas as early as September. Three whole valuable months just spending, anticipating and preparing for that one day. People seem to think something miraculous, life-changing and earth-shaking, something deeply profound, memorable and thrilling would happen on Christmas Day. But what it is, I wonder, I've been through 20 Christmases already and so far nothing of the sort has ever happened. After the last gift has been opened, the last slice of ham has been eaten, we all go back to the harshness of the real world, to the dreariness of our lives. To rising prices, to the poverty of most of our countrymen, to selfish public utility workers staging strikes left and right and wreaking havoc on commuters in the process, to an ineffective government, to personal problems. People and things remain the same. Nothing and no one changes. Nothing new has happened. Christmas is just a temporary escape, or the biggest scam of all for successfully conning us into believing something bigger, better and brighter will happen on this day.

I didn't use to be a Scrooge. As a child, I believed in Santa. I made lists for Santa to read. I kept my temper and restrained myself from answering back to my sisters starting the first day of December lest Santa be displeased and not give me the presents I wanted. I loved to wake up on Christmas Day, eager to unwrap my presents and enjoy the feast my mother had prepared. Once, when I was 8 or 9, and it was two days before Christmas, my parents put me and my two sisters to bed and told us to sleep already. They closed the door and turned out the lights but I couldn't sleep for sheer excitement. My sisters were horsing around in the darkness and I wanted to tell them to quiet down because I swore I could really hear Santa's reindeer's hoofs on our rooftop.

As a 12-year-old, I spent my Christmas in my mother's hometown for the first time. I attended and enjoyed the huge clan reunion. My older cousins and I formed a *barkada* of sorts and we were together all the time, playing, exploring or just hanging out. I also went caroling for the first time. That was a fun, heady Christmas for me.

I don't know what happened since then. I must have grown tired of the whole shebang that is Christmas. I experienced some changes. I found out that Santa was actually my parents being extra-generous with their money (something like dull resignation descended upon me when I realized there really was no Santa). I graduated and stopped going to Christmas class parties and gift-giving. The yearly clan reunion degenerated into something of a tired routine for me. I loathed being uprooted from the comforts of home for a precious few days of my Christmas vacation to travel 10 whole hours to my mother's hometown for the family reunion to mostly sit like a log and politely refuse over and over and over again my relatives' coaxing to join in the dances and parlor games.

My disenchantment with Christmas got to a point where I found myself sitting beside my bedroom window one night, staring out into the darkness at the bright, sparkling Christmas decorations on our neighbors' houses and feeling an incredible melancholy wash over me. I positively wallowed in it, thinking with a sigh: "What are all these décor for? There's nothing joyful about Christmas. I am not happy at all."

My whole attitude changed one night while I was stuck in traffic inside an FX taxi. I was watching workmen stringing up bright lanterns on the street posts when I heard their laughter and banter. The passenger beside me was smiling as she looked at a star-shaped lantern. Only moments earlier, she had been wearing the expression of one who just had the toughest day at work and gotten a severe scolding from the boss. It struck me then that putting up Christmas décor made for a joyful experience and brought out the child in all of us. Sometimes it gets tiring to be an adult and to have to deal with all the responsibilities that come with being one. Seeing those Christmas décor after a hard and busy day somehow lifts up our spirits.

Then the taxi passed a *sari-sari* store displaying a colorful streamer wishing one and all a merry Christmas. For no reason at all, the word "Christ" jumped at me. Then I realized that Christmas was, is and should be all about Christ, about His birth into this world, about His coming to be with us and His saving us from sin. Christmas was never about gifts or parties or Santa Claus.

I felt like a load had been lifted from my shoulders. I had discovered something fully meaningful and truthful, and yet it had been there all the time. Christmas is the birth of the God Who gives me peace and fulfillment when I am at my emptiest, the God in Whom I truly believe and Whom I call fervently and grasp tightly when I am at my lowest. For the reason alone that Christmas signifies Christ's birth and coming to save us, I should rejoice.

Now every time I feel empty and disheartened during the Christmas season, each time I feel like scoffing at or viewing wearily gift-giving, parties and reunions and bright Christmas lights (and the mood still comes sometimes), I tell myself not to feel this way. I do not allow myself to feel this way. I remember that Christmas is about Christ's birth, which is too rare, joyful and precious to squander on the blues. And then I feel happy and thankful. And it helps when, amid all the joyful and lavish celebrations, I take the time to contemplate His birth and its significance and say a little prayer of thanksgiving.

I used to be selfish and focused only on the commercialized, artificial aspect of Christmas. Thus, my depression and emptiness when the Christmas I knew changed, when I discovered that Santa wasn't real, when the gifts stopped coming, when the novelty of reunions wore off. Nothing superficial or artificial is everlasting and fulfilling.

Now I know the true meaning of Christmas is the coming of Christ to be with us and save us from sin. And so I will be happy this Christmas. I will enjoy this Christmas and other Christmases to come.

Tonton Umali, 20, is a Political Science senior at the University of Sta. Tomas.

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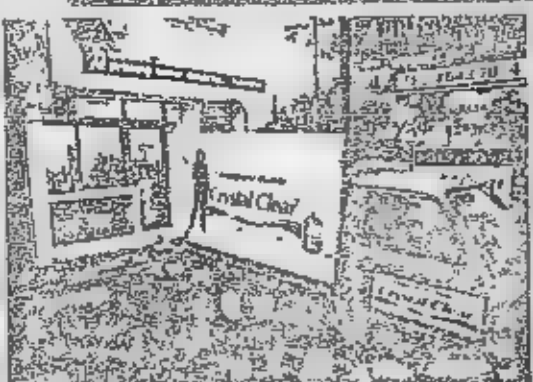
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Red Cross brings 'noche buena' to victims

From page A1

your patron. This is institutional assistance," said Gordon, addressing the crowd in Real prior to the distribution of gift packs.

The senator stressed that the credit should go to the generous Filipinos and international donors who had funded Red Cross' relief operations in the province.

Children as young as 3 years old lined up to get their gift packs together with their parents, most of whom carried infants.

Not just 'pansit'

Twelve-year-old Roger Loba even sang the song, "I believe I can fly," to encourage kids his age to take heart despite their fami-

lies' loss and sufferings.

Captain Red Cross was also there to entertain the kids.

Roger, who has seven other siblings, later told Gordon that the two plastic bags of gift packs he received would be his family's only food for noche buena.

Saved for pansit (noodles), he said they had nothing else on the table.

His father could not go back to fishing because most of the cut logs still littered the sea.

Erlan Paranan and Robimin Pante, both 10, admitted that they wanted toys, new clothes and a bike for Christmas.

"But it's OK. I still have my mama and papa," said Erlan in Tagalog.

Robimin, whose father died

when she was young, agreed. She said she would rather have her mother, a market vendor, safe than get a Barbie doll this Christmas.

This scene was replayed in the next town.

Noche buena

When Gordon and his team reached Infanta, thousands of parents with their children in tow lined up under the midday sun.

"Salamat po. Mahatawid namin ang pansit (Thank you. We can now celebrate Christmas)," said Marilyn Yacub, 33, who has two young children to feed, besides seven other siblings.

Yacub, accompanied by a sister, asked to be included in the list of beneficiaries.

Save for some bread she got from previous relief packs, her family had nothing to eat for Christmas.

Unable to control her happiness, Yacub started to cry.

Her story was no different from most of the other residents of Infanta who either lost or nearly lost their homes. Most have lost families.

Yacub said she braved waist-deep floodwater to save a 3-month-old pig, to no avail.

"It should have been served tonight so we'd have something to put on our table," she said.

People care

Asked why the Red Cross had chosen to distribute noche buena gift packs instead of the usual relief goods, Gordon said: "The dis-

aster has been unusual. A lot of people are depressed. We should let them know that there are people out there who care."

With children in mind, toys were included in the gift packs.

It was Gordon's third visit to these towns which were the worst hit by the recent four deadly storms.

"Some of them have lost their homes, some have damaged homes, some of them have not been able to go back to their fields. The important thing is for people to remember that there are people who think about them, that they're still important," he stressed.

He also exhorted the residents to move on, to try and maintain their dignity as human beings.



YES, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus, at least, to this little girl in Infanta, Quezon, as she carries relief goods given by the Philippine National Red Cross. ROGER MARGALLO

No carolers in Infanta; townsfolk still grieving

From page A1

Manila while those who have nowhere else to go are stuck here, but there is no Christmas," she added.

When the INQUIRER visited the town on Thursday, people were still lining up to get relief goods while others tried to empty their homes of mud.

The unwashed facade of houses showed muddy traces near to the second floors, indicating the level of the floodwaters that descended on the town.

Saddest Christmas

At night, no groups of carolers broke the cold silent night with merry songs.

"Before the flood, there were already some groups who were starting (caroling). Some were even able to get permits from us, but I don't see them now," Glorioso said.

"Nobody would go caroling given the situation we have ... This is our saddest Christmas," she added.

She said she also expected nieces and nephews not to visit their godparents for the traditional gift giving.

"They understand. We have no money and those who received

their pay spent it on paying laborers to remove the mud from their homes," Glorioso said.

But at least, the others were lucky. They still have their homes and their loved ones.

Carpenter Lorenzo "Enzo" Astoria lost three of his four children in the deluge.

"We have nothing to decorate. Our home is gone," Mang Enzo said. He and his family now live with his sister.

"Maybe Christmas will just pass by. Then that's it," he said.

Two days before Christmas, Mang Enzo and his wife Amelia had gone to visit the temporary graves of their two children—6-year-old Lorice and year-old Normel—and were still looking for their missing 4-year-old son Lorena.

Logs destroy home

The couple lost Lorenzo when logs as big as coconut trees destroyed their home. Mang Enzo said that they were about to sleep that night when he noticed that floodwaters had entered their house. Worse, the floodwaters were rising quickly in just a matter of seconds.

The family went up to the roof but the waters continued to rise and boulders and logs started pounding their home.

"We were crying out for help. I tried to open the roof so that we could hold on to something but we were swept away when our house was destroyed," Mang Enzo said.

"It was only morning, around 1 a.m., that the waters subsided. The current was strong. Our only light came from lightning," he said.

Mang Enzo was able to get to the roof of another house while Amelia managed to hold on to a tree.

"We continue to search for Lorenzo in the hope that he is miraculously alive. We hope we can just find him and give him a decent burial beside his siblings," he said.

Mang Enzo said he had not attended any of the traditional dawn Masses (sinbang gabi) that were held in the last nine days before Christmas.

Father Boy said that the parish still celebrated the sinbang gabi at 5 a.m. but most of the people who attended came from the barrios.

No 'puto bumbong'

Also gone are puto bumbong and suman because the town no longer had malagkit, the sticky rice used for these delicacies, which are eaten after Mass.

"We had only one rice cake vendor and I think the vendor came from Laguna. No one

lingers after Mass. Some leave on tricycles," Father Boy said.

Tricycle driver Bustaquio Heniga also did not attend any of the dawn Masses.

Heniga, 48, said he lost 14 of his relatives in the storm and that he was afraid that one might show up at night if he went to Mass. He said the 14 were still missing.

The INQUIRER found Heniga and some of his relatives from the De Loreto clan building temporary shacks to house their families in Purok Pulo, Barangay Ilog, which is near the Agus River.

Their place is more than a kilometer from the town center and it takes a 30-minute walk over mounds of dried mud and fallen trees to get to there.

Some of the houses located on the way had been completely wiped out by the flood and the pathways had been erased. "I think we won't be having Christmas this year," he said.

Dependent on relief goods

Heniga said he and his relatives were just relying on relief goods to stay alive. They only had their sleeping clothes on when the flood swept away 24 of their 25 houses.

They had to borrow a shovel, look around for wood, and ask for nails so

they could put up temporary shelters.

Heniga said he did not expect to have the spaghetti, salad, beer, pulutan and pansit that he and his relatives had feasted on last Christmas.

The three pots that he and his kin have were only given to them. And sometimes, they have to skip their meals when they run out of relief goods.

"How can we have pansit (noodles) when there's no frying pan," he joked.

He said he was also concerned about their children, who used to go caroling even before December.

"But now, people might get angry if the children visit. The simple joys of children to have new clothes and shoes are now gone," he said.

False alarm

Heniga said he feared that the flood would happen again. On Monday, a rumor spread that Army officials had announced that people should move to the evacuation centers because another flood was expected.

"We were really frightened and we ran as fast as we could. Those who were asleep were left behind," he said.

When they reached the town center, officials had to calm them down and tell them that there was no flood

warning. Heniga said he and his relatives decided to stay there rather than return to their shacks.

"I just hope that my missing relatives are still alive. There were reports that some were in Polillo, Mauban, and even Manila, but these were not confirmed. We have no money to go there and confirm it," he said.

"We'll just stay here and try to rebuild our lives. And it's better here, we know each other. You pass by and you're offered some food. It would be different in Manila," he said.

Father Boy said he expected Infanta to recover after seeing those who attended the sinbang gabi in the town and in the barrios.

He said the residents of the barrios that had electricity even before Infanta got its power back started putting on Christmas lights.

"And the dawn Masses I held here were well-attended. Before, we had to wait for them to arrive. Now the crowd just overflowed," he said.

Father Boy said that in the prayers read during Mass, his parishioners expressed their thanks to God for having survived the tragedy.

"They're very hopeful. I'm crying to make them hopeful but I think they're the one's who are giving me hope. I can see in them that this town will rise again," he said.

Alabang house boasts of 200 'belens'

From page A1

size of 5-year-old tots—comprising the cast of the First Noel.

"I guess this is how I show my appreciation of the meaning of Christmas. God chose to become human and have human parents because He loved us so much," Kalalo describes her joyful hobby.

The figurines in her collection are either obtained locally or collected from her travels abroad. Some are gifts.

"I started collecting for friends and relatives to see. Eventually, it became a kind of conversion—my realization of the humanity of Christ," she says.

Wannabe nun

Kalalo is a jet-setting corporate lawyer, who was once a ranking official of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Securities and Exchange Commission. A graduate of the University of the Philippines' College of Law, she obtained her master's degree from the University of Michigan as a Fulbright scholar.

Outside of work, Kalalo is an ac-

tive member of the St. James Parish in Ayala Alabang, offering consultancy to the church's legal assistance program for indigent prisoners. She also heads a foundation caring for penniless cancer patients.

A devoted Catholic and still single, Kalalo recalls growing up in the family house in San Jose, Barangas, beside "the most beautiful church in the province." She once dreamed of becoming a nun, which explains her penchant for collecting religious items.

Though she never actually entered the convent, she befriended many nuns and priests, who would give her a belen or two each year, adding to her collection.

Pensive Joseph

Kalalo's Nativity figures range from abstract forms to realistic images to mechanical dolls. Some are made from what look like popsicle sticks, bamboo or paper-mâché. Most are made of resin, ceramic or terra cotta, while the more elegant sets are metal and crystal.

There are wind chimes, candle

holders, bells, musical boxes, pen holders and paper weights with the Holy Family as motif.

There is a well-mounted icon—an 85-year-old print lent by a priest—which hangs above the doorway leading to the dining room.

On a low center table, Kalalo displays her "most complete set" of 23 separate statuettes, complete with angels and sheep.

Other figures go beyond traditional Christmas imagery and convey deeper meanings. For instance, her newest piece—which comes from Peru—is a pear-shaped wood carving which, when opened, reveals not just a miniature belen, but also a depiction of the "Fall of Adam" as told in Genesis.

Another item—made in Venezuela and a veritable mix of metaphors—shows Mary, Joseph and the newborn Jesus in what appears to be Noah's Ark. Another item, this time from Mexico, has the trio perched on a "Tree of Life."

From Portugal, she has a belen which features a pensive-looking Joseph.

"He must be worried about what would happen to his family," Kalalo muses.

Polar bears at the Nativity

Another interesting Nativity scene is from Canada which has Eskimos, polar bears and penguins around the manger.

Asked which belen she would grab first in case she has to evacuate her house, Kalalo gamely points to two figurines, one from Rome, Italy and the other from Spain—a Lladro.

She has a number of Philippine-made items, but she is proudest of a 5-foot-tall relief sculpture made of wood which, according to the man who sold it in Pampanga, "was part of a door of a local church destroyed by lahars."

The massive work hangs next to her front door.

UN Nativity

About 60 percent of her belen collection were bought in local bazaars. The rest were purchased overseas, she says. From the costumes, facial features and skin tones, it's easy to

guess which figurine came from Russia, India, Latin America, the Balkans and, yes, even Africa.

About a 10th of the collection were gifts from relatives and friends, with special mention of Fr. James Gascon SJ.

"They've started calling my house a 'cathedral' because they say I have more religious items than their convents," she says, laughing.

However, she doesn't know how many figurines she actually owns. "I have not really counted them. But they're definitely more than 200 sets by now," she says.

She reveals that it took her two months to unpack and unwrap all the pieces and put them in orderly display around the house.

After the holidays, she will need another month to wrap each piece in Manila paper put them in their assigned boxes before storing them in the attic.

The Christmas story

Because Kalalo wants to share the spirit of Christmas and its story, she set up a brightly lit belen in front of her house for motorists

and passersby to appreciate. There is a signboard with a few words on Christmas according to Filipino Jesuit and historian, Horacio de Costa.

"Christmas is when we celebrate the unexpected, it is the festival of surprise. This is the night when shepherds wake to the song of angels, when the earth has a star for a sate lite, when wise men go on a fool's errand, bringing gifts to a Prince they have not seen, in a country they do not know."

"This is the night when one small donkey bears on his back the weight of the world's desire and an ox plays host to the Lord of heaven. This is the night when we are told to seek our King not in a palace but in a stable; and although we have stood here year after year, as our fathers before us, the wonder has not faded nor will it ever fade; the wonder of that moment when we push open the idle door, and enter, and entering, find in the arms of a Mother who is a Virgin, a Baby who is God."

Bonus in February for 1.2-million gov't employees

From page A1

He said Budget Secretary Emilio Boncodin had guaranteed the cash gift upon instructions by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The government's failure to give the traditional cash gift this Christmas could be one of the reasons that government employees were not cheerful, according to Bunye.

"We expect a happier Christmas in 2005—prices of crude are going down and the economy is picking up," he said in reaction to the results of a survey by Social Weather Stations.

The survey, conducted from Nov. 23 to Dec. 2, found that fewer adult Filipinos (64 percent) are looking forward to a merry Christmas today compared with the 77 percent in 2003 and 82 percent in 2002.

SWS said 10 percent of the respondents were expecting a sad Christmas today, up from 3 to 4 percent in 2002 to 2004.

Moreover, people pessimistic about their prospects next year outnumber those who are optimistic. Thirty percent expect their quality of life to get, while 25 percent expect their quality of life to improve next year.

Unbelievable but true

Sen Aquilino Pimentel Jr said the findings of the SWS survey were "unbelievable but true" given the recent tragedies and dark clouds looming on the horizon.

"Despite the difficulties crashing their way in the new year and the tragedy that came one after the other, and yet when the sun comes out, Filipinos still look at the bright side of things," he said in a phone interview.

Recently, the country was battered by typhoons that killed more than a thousand people and destroyed billions of pesos worth of property, infrastructure, crops and livestock in Luzon, particularly in Quezon, Aurora and Nueva Ecija.

Pimentel said the new year would bring higher power and water rates and higher prices of basic commodities.

Communications Director Silvestre Abale blamed the growing unhappiness this season to lower government spending and the debilitating impact of the disasters that struck the country.

"But Filipinos have an indomitable spirit when it comes to Christmas. All we need is simple food on the table and the whole family to bring good cheer," said Abale in a text message to the INQUIRER.

"It is the spirit of Christmas that counts and not the polls," he said.

Part of painful reforms

Malacañang appears to have taken the growing dissatisfaction among Filipinos as part and parcel of the painful reforms it has undertaken this year—cutting down on frivolous expenses and

raising government fees—to keep the fiscal house in order.

In her 2004 State of the Nation Address, Ms. Arroyo said that Filipinos "must bear the pain and share the pain to enjoy the gain together."

Malacañang is confident that the reforms it has so far undertaken this year will start bearing fruit next year.

"There will be more resources available for health and education as a result of the fiscal measures. We expect more jobs as a result of better investor confidence," said Bunye in a text message to the INQUIRER.

In the interview aired over the radio, Bunye said the President had decided to give the cash gift on Valentine's Day because employees whose agencies had no savings would not get it for this Christmas.

Bunye said the amount of the cash gift would be "the same" as what was traditionally received by government employees.

Civil servants get an additional

P5,000 cash gift on top of the mandated one-month Christmas bonus and P5,000 cash gift, which was given in two installments in June and this December.

Incentive

Boncodin confirmed an "incentive" was forthcoming but clarified that the amount would depend on the capability of the agencies.

"The amount is not yet sure because we have to make sure it's available for everyone," Boncodin said in a phone interview.

She explained that the government was really hard up in giving an additional cash bonus to workers this Christmas.

Boncodin said if the cash gift were given this month, not all workers would get them, particularly the Department of Education, which accounts for half of the 1.2 million state workers.

"That would be unfair and that is also the consensus in the Cab-

net," she said.

Boncodin said the President asked her to "study the possibility" of giving some kind of incentive to government workers next year.

"I still don't know if it should be called a bonus but it will be for 2005," she said.

The budget secretary said agencies should provide for this incentive in their 2005 budget.

Boncodin said the incentive was in order because the last salary increase for workers in the public sector was in 2001. "It's really time to give some incentives. It's like saying 'thank you for co-operating [with the President's austerity program]," she said.

Boncodin said that because different sectors heeded the President's call for austerity and fiscal reforms, the government was looking forward to meeting the budget deficit target of P184 billion this year. With a report from Christine O. Avendaño

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STAR WATCH

"Happy Together" cast (from left) Mark Herras, Jennylyn Mercado, Yasmien Kurdi, Kris Aquino and Erik Quizon wave to fans who turned out yesterday to watch the Parade of Stars that toured the city, marking the start of the 30th Metro Manila Film Festival. VAL HANDAYON

Back to normal at Pius XII

By Leila B. Salaverria

IT IS a happy Christmas for workers of the Pius XII Catholic Center after all.

The workers, who went on strike on Dec. 13 after talks for the collective bargaining agreement fell through, agreed to a compromise with the center's management on Dec. 20 and returned to work on Dec. 22.

"Everything is back to normal," said Nicolas Oribe, president of the Pius XII Catholic Center Employees Association.

Oribe had said earlier that the employees were prepared to spend Christmas in the streets if further talks between the employees association and the management would fail.

According to Oribe, the strike was declared over when the union and the Board of Trustees agreed that the board would give the employees the equivalent of two year increases. The

agreement was reached in a meeting at the labor department's mediation office on Monday.

The increases had been withheld after it became the subject of a court case when the management appealed the amount.

This case was apart from the most recent CBA negotiations where the employees had protested the P100 a month increase that the management offered, citing lack of resources.

The back increases amount to P1,400 a month, entitling workers to more than P30,000 plus adjustments for 13th-month and overtime pay.

In exchange, the workers agreed to a one-year moratorium on increases and on strikes.

"We are happy that the employees and management were able to come to an agreement. The experience has been an eye-opener for both sides," Oribe said.

Keepers of odd jobs not home for Xmas

By Ruth L. Navarra

WHAT would Christmas be without them?

Toiling for hours, sometimes for little pay, people expect to see these persevering men and women do odd jobs for the holiday season, including Christmas Day, while the rest of us are with family and friends.

PJ Santos, 20, stands on the rooftop of the Dalisay family in Policarpio Street, Mandaluyong City, each night dressed up as Santa Claus to dance the choreographed steps he had practiced for months.

When he saw his first dancing Santa three years ago, he immediately asked around how he could have the job.

"As a kid, I believed in Santa Claus. Now that I'm a grown-up, I want to bring the magic back by being one," said PJ.

Being Santa Claus in this town, he found out, was not an easy job. Fully costumed, he climbs the roof of the Dalisay house, one of the more brightly-lit houses on the street that had earned a reputation for having some of the most attractive outdoor Christmas decor in the metropolis, to entertain passersby through dance.

"But it's all worth it. It's gratifying to see the smiles of the people who literally look up to me," PJ jests. "I love it."

His robotic hand gestures delight the tots in the audience who clap loudly in appreciation. When he scratches his belly, he brings the house down.

Many in the audience, in fact, think PJ is a mechanical or robot Santa, and do a double take when



EDNA Santos does her bit for charity, asking passersby to help fill up her Salvation Army pail. RUDY ESPERAS

they see him descend from the roof during his break to down a bottle of pop.

There are other Yuletide characters who may not be as popular as Santa, but have become part of a Pinoy Christmas. These are the showmen who perform in the fun houses.

Marianito Pontawe was a stuntman for several years before his life took a turn for the worse. Without any regular job, he now cuts hair for bus drivers in Cubao. But for the past five years during the holidays, Marianito morphs into a hunchback when he takes on his seasonal job at the



SANTAS take a break after performing sans their sleigh and reindeer on the rooftop of a house along Policarpio Street in Mandaluyong City. JIM GUANO PUNZALAN

Boom na Boom carnival grounds at the CCP Complex on Roxas Boulevard.

"I look forward to this job because it means security for me and my family for the holidays," said Marianito, who had been tasked to lure visitors to enter the horror house.

His makeover looks like expensive prosthetics work, but one is surprised to find out that he concocted the makeup formula himself. "Years working for the film industry taught me how to be resourceful," he said.

Wearing costumes and makeup helps create a new identity and personality, but Edna Santos needs none of that.

Working for the Salvation Army, all she needs is a clean, crisp white uniform and comfortable pants to do her job. She stands for three hours at the entrance and exit of a Pasig City mall with a red pail, asking for donations.

"I do not get bored because we only do this for Christmas. It is for the Lord and for the people we are able to help," said Edna.

The 23-year-old is a full-time mother of three children. During the holidays, she has to wake up earlier than usual to get a choice spot at the mall. Her job's only requisites? Patience and perseverance in asking people for contributions. "It is tiring because the more coins people drop, the heavier this pail gets," she said, smiling. "But I know that I am doing this for a cause. That is enough to make my aches go away."

The money the Salvation Army collects from kettles around town goes to charitable institutions.

Make every day Christmas Day

THIS is the time of the year when everybody is a little more generous because gift-giving is part of the Christmas ritual.

But do you know that when you give and the gesture comes from your heart and not because you were forced to, the Universe will reward you tenfold? If you don't like the word Universe, then call it God.

When I was a kid and even when I was a ready grown-up, I thought the saying "it's better to give than to receive" a bit silly. Something was added to the receiver while the same something was subtracted from the giver.

And then I attended a seminar on prosperity where participants were taught how to overcome poverty. From then on, my life had changed for the better.

I didn't seek out that seminar. I was forced by a special friend to attend it. I couldn't say no to that special friend, so I attended with a bit of grumbling. Most of the time, I dozed off.

Although I was not paying much attention, I learned one principle that I thought was worth a try: that one is blessed by tithing.

Tithing is giving 10 percent of what you earn to your church or charity. They say it's in the Bible, but I don't read the Bible,

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



and I'm not religious.

Anyway, I set aside 10 percent of my salary for cancer patients at the Philippine General Hospital. My wife said I must be crazy because we couldn't even make both ends meet, and there I was giving a big chunk of my earnings to strangers. I decided on cancer patients because my dad had died of cancer.

And, surprise of surprises, the more I gave, the more I earned! So the more money I gave to charity, you see, I counted the money I earned so I could set aside 10 percent for charity.

How did the money come? I was offered to host a radio show, "Isang-bong Mo kay Tulfo." The show exists to this day. For that show in 1991, I was given a talent fee 10 times what I was earning as a columnist.

And then "Action 9" came. I hosted the controversial TV program on Channel 9 with Dong Puno and Rey Langit. The talent fee was even bigger than the one on radio.

I won't mention the amount I give to charity—which has now widened to include old folks at a home for the aged and victims of calamities—because that would be bragging. But I'd say it's much, much more than when I started tithing in 1985.

How did the good fortune come about? I attribute it to tithing which is practiced by some religions. Members who tithe don't lack material things. The more they give, the more they receive.

Tithing is also practiced by some tribes in many parts of the world. These tribes burn the best part of their harvests for their gods because they expect a better harvest in the coming season. And they indeed get a better harvest.

Sometimes you ask why the generous rich become richer and the poor, poorer. Now, I know the answer. The generous rich become richer because they share part of their earnings with their fellowmen. The poor have nothing to share, so naturally they don't give. The Universe is generous to people who are generous to their fellowmen.

They say that what you sow is what you reap. If you're selfish, the Universe will be stingy. If you're generous, the Universe will be generous. So, make every day Christmas Day.

No Yule cheer in these homes

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

MANY of the families faced with the prospect of dislocation because of the ongoing Northrail Project have decided not to adorn their houses with Christmas decorations this year.

Because the government has yet to announce their final date of relocation, the affected families will have to celebrate the holidays with uncertainty and doubt.

"This is a sad Christmas for us," Samahan ng mga Naninirahan sa Riles (Malabon City) vice

president Luz Loro said yesterday.

She used to maintain a tailoring shop, with job orders usually peaking during the holidays. This year, she had stopped accepting orders, thinking she might not finish them on time if the government suddenly orders them to vacate their houses.

Most of the affected families had also long packed their things, anticipating that the government would order them to leave anytime.

The families' only wish this

Christmas?

Federation of Railways Informal Settlers in Malabon president Clarita Eberia said they hoped the government would allow them to stay until March 31 next year.

"We want our children to finish the school year first. Otherwise we will have a hard time processing their school records," Eberia said.

The National Housing Authority had said many times in the past that the relocation would push through. The last deadline set was Dec. 3.

Profits bring bounty to prisoners

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A FÊTE well-earned.

Profits brought in by the prison exchange store paid for the 15 roasted pigs (lechon) and more than 700 smoked hams that inmates of the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa City feasted on at their Noche Buena last night.

Bureau of Corrections Director Vicente Vinarao told the Inquirer that the proceeds from

the store inside the NBP managed by the prisoners yielded a profit enabling the 18,000 prisoners inside the maximum, medium and minimum security cells to receive P50,000 in cash for their efforts.

The store is where prisoners and their families are allowed to buy canned goods, soap and other essentials at prices lower than those offered in facilities outside the NBP.

Vinarao also said the lechon

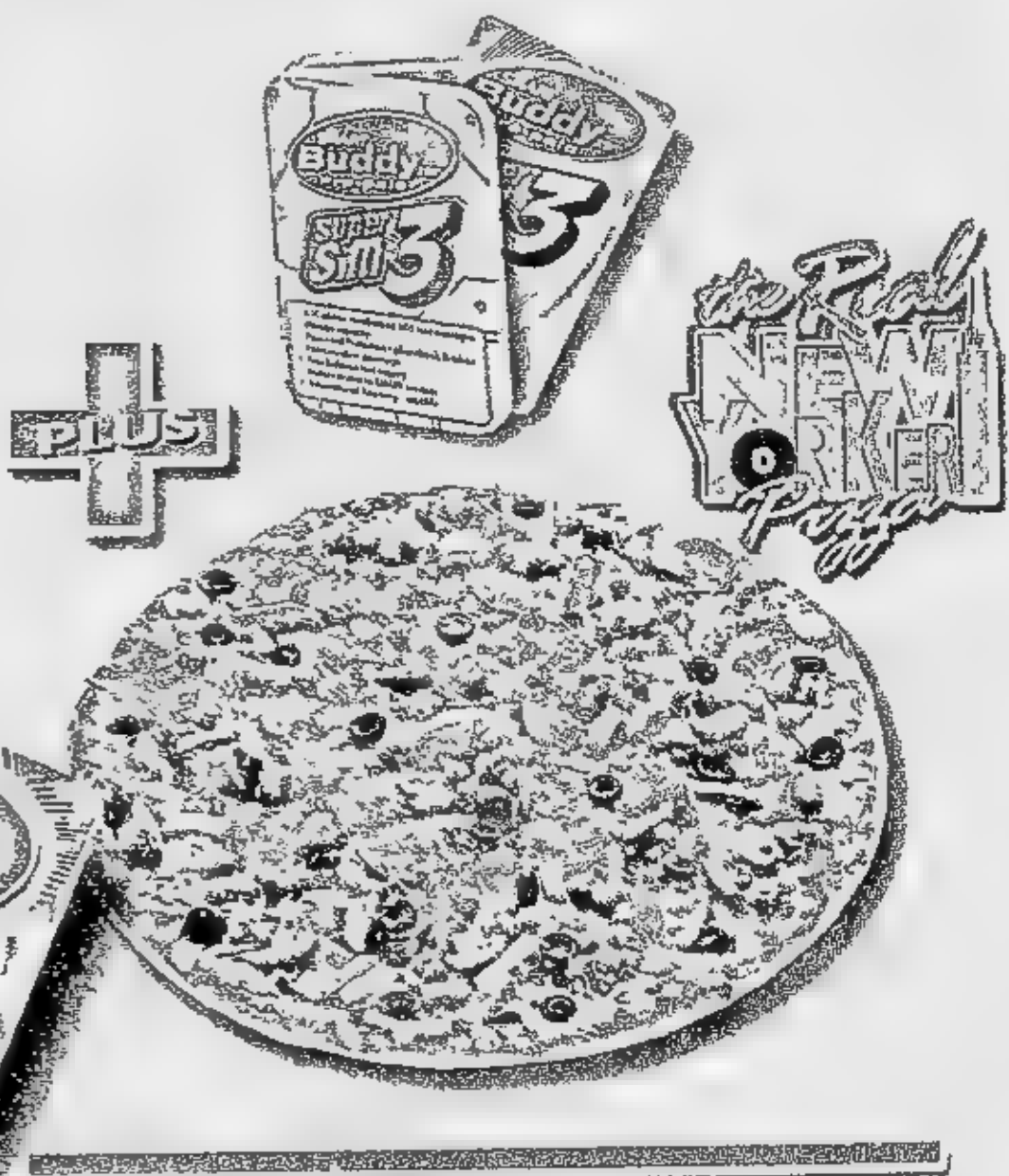
and the hams were handed over to 15 prison leaders for distribution to fellow inmates in their respective cells.

"My special request to all the inmates is to avoid trouble so they can celebrate the season in peace with their families. Vinarao said.

Families are allowed visits, especially during the holidays, he said, adding that a priest was also allowed to hold Mass for Dead Row detainees.

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TENNIS: US Open 2004
Rerun: 12:30 p.m., STAR Sports—Relive the quarterfinal match between Jennifer Capriati and Serena Williams.
BASEBALL: 2004 MLB All-Star Game: 10 p.m. (ET)
ESPN—Rerun and take another look at the mid-season classic in Houston.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.



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Compiled by L. Mangiat

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Great chance awaits Pacquiao in Cebu

By Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor

MANNY Pacquiao could avail of championship-caliber sparring not too far from his native GenSan, but he must agree to momentarily break away from his holiday spree.

Pacquiao could fly anytime to Cebu where World Boxing Council featherweight king In-jin Chi of South Korea is currently training at the famous ALA Gym in Talamban.

"Yes, he is here," confirmed Cebu sportsman Tony Aldeguer, owner of the ALA Gym when asked by this writer if indeed Chi is training at his sweat shop.

"The manager (Ku Sung Lee) personally asked me through Arty. Rudy Salud during the Yanig sa Taguig fight," Aldeguer explained on why Chi secretly flew to Cebu.

Chi has reportedly decided to transfer base in Cebu owing to Korea's chilly winter season, which makes training there impossible. He is preparing for his second WBC title defense against Australian Tommy Browne on January 30.

Chi would not say it but he should be more than gratified if he could augment his preparation with a few rounds of sparring against Pacquiao, considered by some sectors as the finest featherweight fighter in the world today.



IN-JIN Chi: Perfect Pacquiao sparring mate.

Working out together should also boost the chances of both Pacquiao and Chi in their forthcoming fights.

But it's doubtful if Pacquiao, caught in the swirl of the holidays, would have the appetite for some man-size bashing inside the ring.

In fact, the Ring Magazine featherweight champion has insisted he would leave to train in earnest at the Wild Card Boxing Club in California on Jan. 5, not immediately after Christmas as had been advised by trainer Freddie Roach.

Pacquiao on Friday signed a contract for a rematch against WBA/IBF featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez for \$900,000 on Feb. 26.

Chi is one of the elite fighters being considered to face Pacquiao, along with Marquez, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Erik Morales. His stand-up, forward style should make him a perfect foe for Pacquiao.

Chi won the WBC title with a seventh-round knockout over Michael Brodie in April this year.

Their first encounter had resulted in a draw.

Last July, Chi defended against Japanese Eiichi Sugama and won via a tenth-round technical knockout.

The ALA Gym is known as the former home of prizefight boxing luminaries like ex-WBC champs Gerry Peñalosa and Malcolm Tunacao, ex-WBA champ Joma Gamboa, world-title challenger Edito "Ala" Villamor, Andy Tabanas among others. It is also where current world-ranked fighters as Randy Suico, Rev Santillan, Rey Bautista, and Yukka Gejon train.

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WHAT'S INSIDE
■ PSC coach scores lack of volleyball program /A19
■ Trying hard the 2nd time around /A18



Free PBA Xmas game admission today



MEMORIES of Christmas past: The last time the league held a Christmas Day game, Rudy Hatfield (left), seen here going for a dunk against Don Carlos Allado of Alaska, led the Coca-Cola Tigers to the All-Filipino crown. A trailing All Peek, then a member of the Aces, has since been traded to the Tigers.

CHRISTMAS day wasn't quite merry for Rodney Santos and Migs Noble when they fought for Alaska and lost to Coca-Cola in an all-Filipino championship series exactly two years ago.

Santos and Noble hope it wouldn't be as cheerless today when they play for the Barangay Ginebra Kings against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals at 4:30 p.m. in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

It will be the second time that PBA will play on Christmas day, but this is the first time that a double-header will be played on the same date with San Miguel Beer and Red Bull opening the curtains at 2 p.m.

"We have reserved the best for the holidays and I'm sure the fans will enjoy this Christmas offering," said PBA Commissioner Noli Eala, who opened the general admission section to the public as a holiday treat.

The winners could have a sumptuous feast afterward as they will end their elimination-round schedule on a winning note with a chance to grab the important seat of their choice.

For the Gin Kings and the Phone Pals, a victory will mean securing the top seed and the outright entry into the best-of-five semifinals while leaving their fallen opponents to a sudden-death clash with Shell for the No. 2 spot.

Though the stakes are lower in the San Miguel Beer-Red Bull collision, a setback will certainly spell doom, especially for the Barako.

Allowing the Beermen to replicate their 93-82 victory over the Barako would send the Photokina Marketing franchise plummeting to 10th place where they would have to beat the third-ranked team twice in the wildcard phase to advance to the quarterfinals.

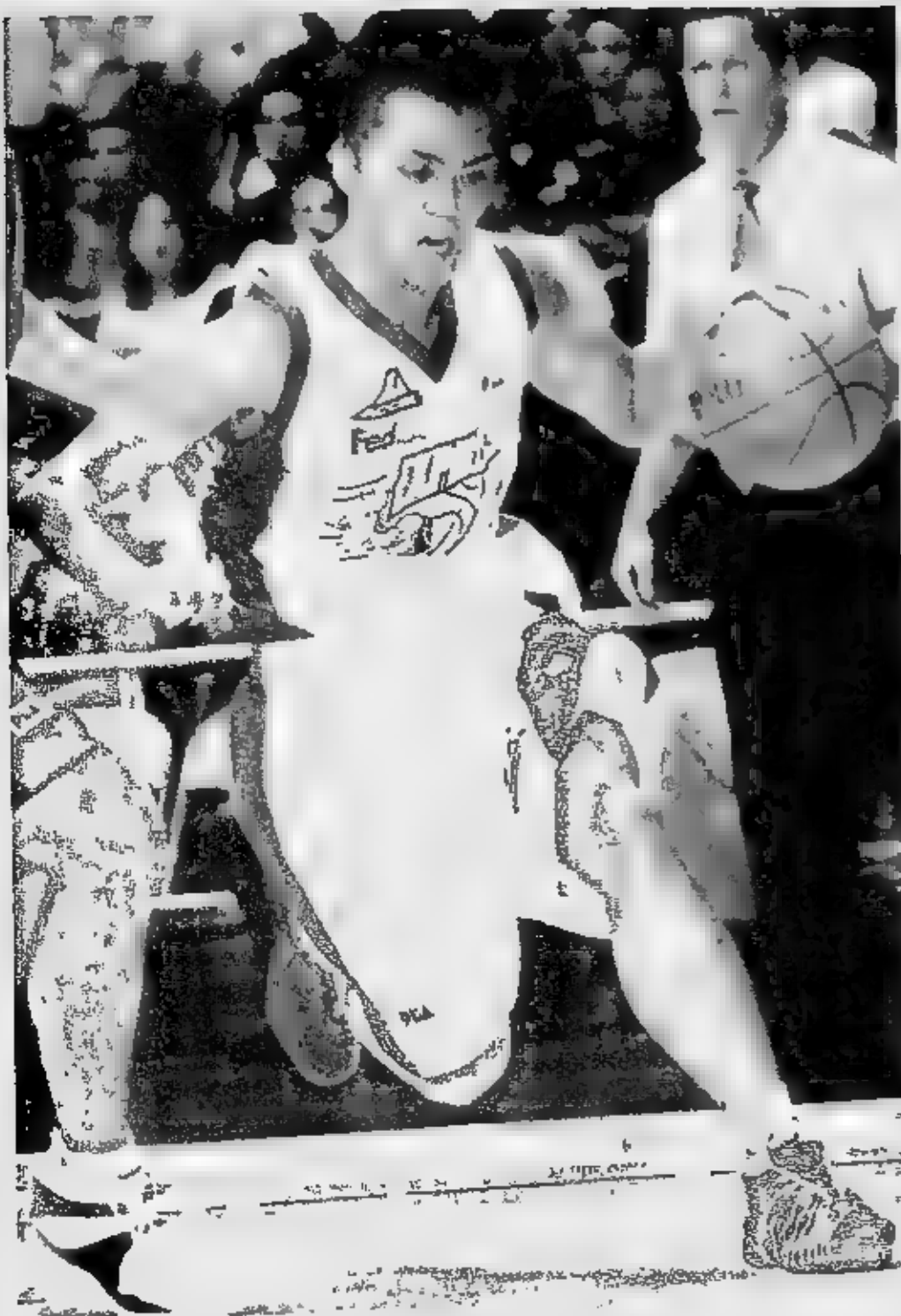
Should the Barako come out victorious, the FedEx Express will have to yield against the Coca-Cola Tigers and the Sta. Lucia Realtors.

FREE A18

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RENREN RITUALO

Trying hard the 2nd time around



RENREN Ritualo hopes to make it to the national team this time.

By June Navarro

RENREN Ritualo refused to feel bitter when he failed to make it to the national team spruced up by Philippine Basketball Association stars two years ago.

He took that rejection as an outstanding challenge.

In fact, the 6-foot-1 FedEx Express sniper has been pushing himself to the limit with the hope of making it as a candidate for national squad expected to be formed early next year.

"It was a good experience and I have no regrets when I got cut from the lineup," said the 25-year-old Ritualo. "There are many chances of playing for the national team and I remain optimistic."

Fresh from the amateur ranks in 2002, Ritualo's name was stricken out of the final lineup bound for the Busan Asian Games. The team eventually landed fourth following a heart-breaker against South Korea in the semifinals and a subsequent loss to Kazakhstan.

The 2002 Rookie of the Year then began to make a name for himself, consistently winning awards from the PBA and the PBA Press Corps the past two seasons for his fine marksman ship.

Acknowledged as the best pure shooter in the PBA today, Ritualo could be a vital cog to the success of the national squad in international competitions.

The PBA has embarked on a four-year rehabilitation program of the men's basketball national team following an agreement forged recently with the Basketball Association of the Philippines.

The RP team's primary targets are the ABC championships next year and in 2007, which will serve as qualifying tournaments for the 2006 world championships in Satama, Japan, and 2008 Beijing Olympics, respectively.

This early, Ritualo has been jacking up his numbers, leading the Express in scoring with 20 points per game, which is currently third overall in the conference.

"I still have many things to learn and I will not stop from improving my craft," said Ritualo, who scored 32 points mostly from the triecta territory during the Express' recent loss against the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs.

Regardless of who will coach the national team, Ritualo sees no problem as far as work ethics and discipline are concerned. He has never been under the tutelage of any of the four national team coaching aspirants.

Coca-Cola's Chot Reyes, Joel Banao of Talk 'N Text, Red Bull's Yeng Guiao and Tim Cone of Alaska are the top candidates for the RP team coaching portfolio.

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala has already picked his choice but declined to announce it pending the special meeting of the PBA Board of Governors on Dec. 29.

"I always follow what coaches tell me. It will hardly matter whoever the PBA designates as coach if I get picked for the team," said Ritualo, who played for the RP Youth team back in 1996, his only legitimate stint as a national so far.

Ardina dominates Nike jungolf

FORMER world jungolf champion Dottie Ardina hopped into a new division and still dominated the opposition with a rousing victory while Bambee dela Paz scored a big upset in the Nike-sponsored Christmas tournament of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines at the Canlubang north course recently in Laguna.

Ardina scored an 80 and finished 11 strokes ahead of Andrea Legaspi in girls Class C (11-12 years) to keep her unbeaten run in the local scene.

Dela Paz joined Ardina in the list of girls division winners with a 79, beating Marcet Salviao by five in Class A (15-17 years) while Crystal Superal led another

family sweep by topping Class B (13-14 years).

Crystal's younger brother Wolen turned in the day's best round of one-under 71 to win boys Class C by 18 strokes while their youngest sister topped girls Class E (7-8 years) which was played at the Riviera executive course by seven.

Andie Unson prevailed in girls Class D (9-10 years) and Janella Buen was the winner in girls Class F (6 and under).

Matthew Manotoc edged IG Gutierrez by two shots with a 73 in Class A.

The results:
Class A: Boys 73 Matthew Manotoc, 76 IG

Guillermo, 76 Milo Yee, Girls 79 Bambee dela Paz

84 Marcet Salviao, 95 Mabel Salviao
Class B: Boys 76 Jikik Abdou, 79 Migo Ochao

85 RJ Ramos, Girls 77 Crystal Superal, 84 Cynthia Marie Rodriguez, 96 Beverly Mendoza

Class C: Boys 71 Wolen Superal, 89 Jotlim Carlos, 94 Sam Sacedor, Girls 80 Dottie Ardina, 91 Andrea Legaspi, 91 Nicole Martinez

Class D: Boys 77 Bino dela Paz, 78 JR Gorzales, 93 Julius Quibran, Girls 89 Andie Unson, 109 Marv Monsalvo

Class E: Boys 59 AR Ramos, 64 Jason Buen, 75 Aaron Dujala, Girls 66 Princess Superal, 73 Felicia Medalla, 73 Kim Mingli

Class F: Boys 77 Kauli Kano, 82 Ivan Monsalvo, 88 Ryan Monsalvo, Girls 69 Janella Buen, 125 Eliza Agustin

Free admission in PBA...

From page A17

against the Alaska Aces for Red Bull to grab, at best, seat No. 8.

A setback would push the Beermen settling for fifth or sixth while a victory would allow them to dispute the fourth slot in a one-game playoff with either the Aces or the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs.

In case of a triple tie, The Beermen will face the Aces in the playoff since the TJ Hotdogs possess an inferior quotient.

Today's games, originally scheduled early in the month, were canceled at the last minute due to inclement weather. Today's holiday double-header is the culmination of a series of festivities organized by the league for the Yuletide season.

It started barely three weeks ago when teams engaged in gift giving ceremonies and outreach programs for children in a span of 12 days followed by a special tribute to Alvin Patrimonio of Purefoods last Dec. 22. June Navarro

Buncio aids RP's fourth place finish

SHAH Alam, Malaysia—Maico Buncio of Team Yamaha Racing-Philippines made the country proud with his remarkable showing in the second Yamaha Asean Cup held in Shah Alam, Malaysia, recently.

Hardly bothered by the presence of his more-experienced Southeast Asian rivals, Buncio led the Philippines to a respectable fourth-place finish in the prestigious competition organized by Yamaha Motor Corp. as part of its efforts to promote motorcycle road racing in the region.

The 16-year-old high school student at OB Montessori (Sta. Ana), Buncio held his own during the two-part race to finish 16th overall out of 25 novice participants who used identically prepared CRYPTON Z Yamaha underbone motorcycles with minimum modifications for racing use and safety.

The Yamaha Asean Cup is a road race highlighting the strengths of the 4-stroke underbone motorcycle. Far different from the 2-stroke scooter, the fuel-efficient underbone is now widely used not only for competitions but as regular transportation as well.

More importantly, Buncio was the highest finisher among the field of first-timers to join this international competition.

The event was dominated by veteran riders from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. It was the first time for the Philippines and Singapore to join the event and next year's cup will be held in Thailand.



GREAT MOMENTS ON FILM: One of the year's best images came in Augusta National, when Phil Mickelson won the US Masters, scraping the tag as the most talented golfer to never win a Major off his back.

Dungca tops Eliong tilt

OMAR Dungca emerged the overall individual champion while powering Lubao 2 to the team championship in the third "Ka Eliong" memorial and inter-town golf tournament at the Royal Northwoods Golf Club in San Rafael, Bulacan, recently.

With Dungca at the helm, Lubao 2 scored 225 points to capture the overall team title in the two-day event held to commemorate the memory of the late Cornelio Pancho, better known as "Ka Eliong" for the Bulakeños and the prime mover of the Royal Northwoods Golf Club.

Other members of Lubao 2 were Raymond Sangil, C. Delos Santos and Ferdie Auzo.

Meycauayan 2 pooled 208 points to beat Isabela 1 and rule the Class A division of the tournament which drew 160 participants from different municipalities around the country.

Isabela 1 scored 188 points. Sen. Lito Lapid, Gov. Mark Lapid, Gov. Tomas Joson III and members of the 2004 Federation Golf League champion team Royal Northwoods graced the two-day event also staged to raise funds for the Ka Eliong Foundation.

SPORTSWATCH

P1M staked in Rotary golf

BIG prizes, topped by P1 million and a car or its cash equivalent of P700,000, are at stake in the RBGFP (Rotary Golfing Fellowship Foundation of the Philippines) annual tournament slated Jan. 19-22 at the Camp John Hay Golf & Country Club and Baguio Country Club courses. Rotarians can win the P1 million hole-in-one assigned in four par 3s of both courses (two holes per course) and the car or its P700,000 cash equivalent in another four par 3s. Participants have to pay a tournament fee package of P4,950 on or before Jan. 10, 2005. The package includes green fee for both courses, free practice round in each course, four cocktail/dinner events, giveaways, raffle items and prizes. Major sponsors of the annual golf fest are Camp John Hay GCC, Baguio Country Club, Patron Corp., Integrated Pipe Specialists, Asia Brewery, Asian Therapeutics (Os-Im), GNC and Enriquaz Security Service Inc. For more details, call RBGFP Secretariat: Paulina Sevilla (09209199000) or Leah Grubal (09209087635) at 7212567 loc. 154 or thru e-mail rgfpp1987@yahoo.com or fax no. 7215940.

Alexander named Aussie Fed Cup skipper

SYDNEY, Australia—Former Davis Cup player John Alexander was selected Friday as Australia's Fed Cup team for 2005, taking over from Evonne Cawley who retired in November after three years. Alexander, the first man since Neale Fraser in 1976 to head the women's team, will be looking to guide the Australian team back into main world group. The team was knocked out of the world group in July after losing a playoff to Thailand. His first matches in charge will be the Asia/Oceania Zone Group round-robin competition in April. The youngest player to compete in Davis Cup for Australia, Alexander represented Australia in 41 matches from 1968 to 1989 and reached a career high ranking of No. 8 in singles. He has been a television commentator in recent years.

A Christmas story

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza



bike gone, how will you report for work?" "I will walk," said father. "I promised our son the basketball. A promise is a promise."

It was at this juncture that their two daughters arrived. "What seems to be the trouble? Can we be of help?"

"Your brother, I promised him a basketball this Christmas," father said to the girls. "I do not have the money for it."

The eldest said, "You do not have the money now, but will you be able to pro-

duce it in time for Christmas?"

"I am afraid no," said father.

The second daughter said, "OK, let's pause for a while. Maybe, after a little silence, we could come up with the solution."

To cut the story short, the kid, not yet 8 years old, got his basketball on Christmas Day.

How?

A week before Christmas, the second daughter went to the mayor's wife and accepted the job being offered her: To baby-sit for the child of the mayor all the eve of Christmas. The mayor's wife was the Grade 3 teacher of the girl. In return for her services, she would receive a basketball.

At first, father was reluctant about the idea.

"I can't allow this to happen," he said. "This is my problem. I will solve this myself."

But he was outvoted, 3-1. Ever the good sport, father accepted

his fate. And to show his sincerity, he biked his daughter to the mayor's wife every morning during the five days that she had to baby-sit. Mother and her eldest stayed home—with the son not knowing anything about what was happening.

As a bonus to the baby-sitter, the mayor's wife gifted her with a sack of rice and a huge ham, in addition to the basketball.

When it was time to give the basketball to the boy, father said to his son, "A-sus, my dear child, as your gift to us please give this bag of rice to our barangay captain?"

Jesus immediately obliged. Dribbling the basketball with his right hand, his left hand clutching the four gantas of rice stuffed in a bag, off Jesus went.

The moral of the story?

Christmas is not only about giving and receiving, it is also about teamwork.

Merry Christmas!

PSC coach scores lack of volleyball program

By Musong R. Castillo

TATS Suzara's PSC Legends are winning games at an impressive rate in the Shakey's V-League volleyball tournament.

The problem is, they shouldn't be. Despite being impressed at the league and by the vision its organizers are trying to fulfill, Suzara admitted he is disappointed at the class of the rest of the field.

Or the obvious lack of it. "We have no dominating talent out there," Suzara said. "Can we see anyone there who can take over a game? The program (of the Philippine Amateur Volleyball Association) is obviously non-existent."

The Legends, a motley crew of mothers who were made to come out of retirement for the league's second conference, has won four of its six first round games.

They took reigning UAAP titlist La Salle and

defending champion Santo Tomas to five grueling sets in the only two games that they lost.

Against the Tigresses, PSC played its fourth game in two weeks, and against the Lady Archers, the Legends lost attacker Teresa dela Rosa to a foot injury in the third set.

Not that Suzara, a member of the development commission of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), is offering excuses. He did not have the intention of winning games, anyway.

What bothers him is the fact that his team was invited to the tournament to lose games, and yet, they seem poised to win the championship against a field made up of players who could be their daughters.

"Look, my players were in their prime more than 10 years ago. Some of them have borne kids and all of them have stopped playing at around that time," Suzara explained.

"And now you tell me that we are beating teams with players half their age, who are involved in solid volleyball programs with their schools?"

Suzara was secretary-general of the Pava in 1993, the last time the country won a gold medal in volleyball in the Singapore Southeast Asian Games.

Suzara pooled his former players together a month before the tournament, made them practice every other day and made it no secret that they will be playing in the tournament "to inspire the younger set of players."

"Now we have a sponsor who wants to finance the team, because they can see the skill is there, something they don't see in the other teams."

The tournament is on a two-week break, with the second round of the eliminations to resume on Jan. 4.

And Suzara sees his Legends to be playing even better, with the break for the holidays to be used to rest their aching limbs that have been slowed by time.

"I hope the people at the Pava do their job, and that is to develop volleyball in the country. They have no program, no tournament."

Foreign bets join RP Ladies

NATIONAL players of Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia are set to plane in to beef up what should be the strongest fields for the Philippine Ladies Open golf championship slated Jan. 12-14 at the Manila Golf Club course inside Forbes Park.

Among the confirmed entries are Nontaya Sinsawang and Suteera Chanachai of Thailand who are both carrying handicaps of 2 while Singapore will be represented by Melissa Loh (handicap 3), Sock Hwee Koh (6), Christabel Goh, Su-ann Heng (6) and Kristle Koh.

The Malaysian Ladies Golf Association recently sent word that it will also field bets to the annual 54-hole tourney organized by the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines.

WGAP president Nancy Ortiga



AGOJO: Leads local charge

said that neighboring countries are sending their national players over as part of their preparations for the Southeast Asian Games, which the country will host next year.

"Though the competitions will be held in another course, I believe they would want to put their players to test against their possible opponents," said Ortiga.

Frances Bondad, the Fil-Australian who won last year, is definitely coming back to defend the title, according to Ortiga.

Jayvie Agojo will be spearheading the local contingent together with former champion Carmelette Villaroman and former national players Anya Tanpinco, Aileen Rose Yao and Lora Roberto.

Deadline for submission of entries is on Dec. 30, 2004. Interested parties may call 0917-5295324 for details or email wgap71@hotmail.com. Entry forms are available at Manila Golf Club and may be faxed to 5319190.



BONDAD: Definitely coming

THE PSC Legends should have been piling up losses in the Shakey's V-League right now. Instead, the team's head coach believes, supposed has-beens like Rosamarie Parochina (left) have been smashing their way past a "quality-deprived" field.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
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Nuggets gain rare holiday treat: Christmas at home

DENVER—Life does not get much cushier than it does for NBA players.

For many, no day is complete without an afternoon nap. They take chartered flights with custom seating and first-rate food, and stay in the finest hotels on the road. And when they reach their destination, they get to play a game they have loved since childhood—for a mind-boggling salary.

But even the best job can't make up for time away from home, which is common during the holidays for NBA players. The Denver Nuggets just spent 12 days playing seven games on the East Coast.

Nuggets coach Jeff Bzdelik knows the routine this time of year, having spent three decades in basketball. He spent seven years working for Pat Riley with both New York and Miami.

"A couple of times when I was with Coach Riley we left at 4 o'clock Christmas Eve to play a noon nationally televised game on Christmas Day," he said. "That's tough on everyone."

With a rare three-day break before their home date with Dallas on Sunday, the Nuggets will practice Friday, giving them a brief chance to catch up with family affairs.

Several Nuggets will be welcoming

family members from out of town this weekend. Guard Andre Miller will get a week with his 5-year-old son, Duane, visiting from Phoenix. Forward Rodney White will get to see the first Christmas of his 7-month-old daughter, Nalani Joi.

"This will be my best Christmas ever," said White, who is flying in his daughter's family from California.

Perhaps no Nugget has waited longer for this week than Bryon Russell. The guard's wife and three children stayed in California when he came to Colorado this offseason. An 11-year NBA veteran, Russell said he is used to being away

from loved ones during the season.

"Of course, I wouldn't spend Christmas without them," he said.

Russell joked about his young son, who is already learning to play his father's game.

"For a 6-year-old, he's all right," he said. "He can shoot on 10-foot goals lefty. I've got a gold mine in the making."

Several Nuggets said that as hard as traveling this time of year can be on them, others in the family have it harder.

"It puts a lot of pressure on your wife to bear the burden of making the house

festive and in the Christmas spirit—getting the presents, chauffeuring the kids, decorating the house," said Bzdelik, adding that he was going to do some last-minute shopping Thursday during the Nuggets' day off.

Kenyon Martin admitted he did not do much of the shopping in his family.

"That's what I've got a wife for," he said. "A wife and the Internet. I take care of hers and she takes care of everyone else."

Martin counts himself lucky to be home both for Christmas and his son's birthday on Jan. 6.

New York Times News Service

Suns, Heat stretch scorching streak

NEW YORK—Amare Stoudemire had 30 points and 11 rebounds as the Suns won their 10th straight game, downing the Memphis Grizzlies, 109-102, in Phoenix on Thursday.

Shawn Marion added 29 points and seven rebounds for Phoenix, whose 23-3 record is the best start in the NBA since the Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls went 41-3 to begin the 1995-96 season.

Steve Nash added 17 points and 14 assists for the Suns, while Quentin Richardson had 17 points and 10 rebounds. Phoenix also had a nine-game winning streak earlier this season.

Mike Miller had 22 points and seven rebounds to lead the Grizzlies.

In other games, Manu Ginobili scored 22 points as the Spurs beat the Minnesota Timberwolves, 96-82, in San Antonio.

Tim Duncan had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, while Tony Parker added 19 points.

Wally Szczerbiak scored 22 points for the Wolves, who have lost four straight road games. Kevin Garnett had 15 points, 10 boards and 9 assists.

In Sacramento, Shaquille O'Neal had 25 points and 10 rebounds as the Miami Heat overcame a 17-point deficit to beat the Kings, 109-107.

Dwyane Wade had 22 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds for the Heat, which will carry a 10-game winning streak into their Christmas Day game against Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers.

Chris Webber scored 26 points and Mike Bibby added 21 points and eight rebounds for the Kings, while Peja Stojakovic chipped in with 19 points as Sacramento blew a 12-point lead in the final six minutes.

Meanwhile, a much awaited Christmas reunion between former Los Angeles Lakers teammates Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant finally arrives here Saturday like a gift from Santa.



MIAMI Heat center Shaquille O'Neal, center, hangs from the rim after dunking.

Few regular-season games have attracted the hype and attention surrounding the return of O'Neal with the Miami Heat to the Staples Center, where he spent eight seasons with the

Lakers and won three NBA crowns alongside Bryant.

"I'm a little banged up but I'm going to be ready to play good clean basketball," O'Neal said.

Reuters

Opening act over, Kobe, Lakers ready for Shaq, Miami

LOS ANGELES—There was the opening act Wednesday night, the Lakers' 101-89 victory over the New Orleans Hornets. Then there was the main event, as Kobe Bryant stood before his locker and the full focus of the basketball world shifted to him and his team.

They finished the 25th game of their season successfully at Staples Center—though they might have lost Caron Butler in the process—then turned their attention to the one unlike any other in franchise history.

It will be a nationally televised Christmas Day reunion between Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal, teammates through eight seasons, three championships and countless feuds, inescapable in its promotion over the past weeks.

"I can't believe they're actually spending money marketing this game," said Bryant, who had 29 points against New Orleans. "I think this has had eight years of marketing."

Now comes the game the Lakers have been asked about 10 times a day this month, by friends, family and reporters. They have two days to prepare, with O'Neal and the Miami Heat arriving in Los Angeles late tonight.

"It's good to finally have it here and have it upon us," center Chris Mihm said. "For a while it seemed like it was forever away. Then it's been like right around the corner here all December."

First they had to win a game Wednesday that had all the feel of a dress rehearsal, against a Hornets team that dropped to an NBA-worst 2-23.

New Orleans stayed within a basket until the final four minutes, when point guard Chuckie Atkins hit the last of his six 3-pointers to put the Lakers in front for good. Atkins finished with a season-high 30 points.

"Any means necessary," Atkins said. "That's what I said. I think that was the motto today because we had to win this game. We had to go in to Saturday with some kind of confidence."

But the Lakers (14-11) could not get to the end of the game without incident.

With 3:27 left, Butler got tangled up with Hornets guard Dan Dickau as Bryant headed down court for a breakaway dunk.

Butler and Dickau fell to the ground and Butler struck Dickau once in the midsection. He was ejected, though Butler said afterward he was merely trying to protect his surgically repaired knee from being injured again.

Tomjanovich, meanwhile, said he would try in the next two days to "maybe read some of the hype" he keeps getting told about.

Bryant took care of the rest from there, responding to O'Neal's comment Monday about Bryant being a Corvette and him being a brick wall on that fateful first drive through the lane.

"I'm so far from a Corvette, it's not even funny," Bryant said. "He could have said a Lamborghini or something."

Bryant also was asked about whether he thought former coach Phil Jackson would be joining the millions expected to watch on ABC.

"If he's out on his little canoe," Bryant said, "he'll have his little TV screen."

If O'Neal was watching his former team Wednesday from Sacramento, he might have been baffled by who was starring for the Lakers.

Mihm scored 11 points and grabbed 21 rebounds, matching the NBA high for this season.

Mihm also became the first Laker to total 20 rebounds in a game since O'Neal, the player Mihm will try to stop Saturday.

New Orleans guard Baron Davis scored 17 points and hit five 3-pointers as the Hornets trimmed what had been a 15-point Lakers lead to a three-point deficit (73-70) early in the fourth.

But the Lakers held on and Atkins was asked if his team was ready to step onto the stage that awaits.

"I don't think we're there yet," Atkins said. "But we have to go out and make things happen."

New York Times News Service

Rockets get Barry; Knicks lose Crawford

HOUSTON, Texas—Three-point specialist Jon Barry was obtained by the Houston Rockets here Thursday in a National Basketball Association trade that sent guard Tyrone Lue to the Atlanta Hawks in exchange.

The Rockets have struggled to a 12-14 start, 11th in the Western Conference, and rank only 27th in offense in the 30-team league with 88.9 points a game.

Veteran shooting guard Barry averaged 5.2 points and 1.8 assists in 16 games with the Hawks and will likely come off the bench when star guard Tracy McGrady takes a break.

Meanwhile, New York Knicks guard Jamal Crawford will be sidelined anywhere from three-to-six weeks with a case of turf toe.

Crawford suffered the injury in the third quarter of Wednesday's 114-109 loss to Boston when he was stepped on by the Celtics' Jiri Welsch. X-rays on Crawford's foot proved to be negative, but the fifth-year pro will likely be placed on the injured list prior to Sunday's game against Charlotte.

The 24-year-old is putting together his best season, averaging a career-high 19.3 points along with 2.7 assists through 26 contests.

Crawford was acquired by New York along with guard Jerome Williams in an offseason trade with Chicago for Dikembe Mutombo, Othella Harrington, Frank Williams and Cezary Trybanski.

AFP/Reuters

O'Neal OK'd for Pacers-Pistons grudge match

NEW YORK—Jermaine O'Neal will be able to play for the Indiana Pacers against the Detroit Pistons on Saturday after a US District Court here Thursday upheld a reduction in the suspension from a brawl.

Federal Judge George Daniels upheld a ruling Wednesday by arbitrator Roger Kaplan that cut the suspension on O'Neal imposed by National Basketball Association commissioner David Stern from 25 to 15 games.

Because O'Neal missed his 15th game on Wednesday, he can return on Christmas Day when the Pacers play host to Detroit in their first meeting since the Nov. 19 encounter that ended with a melee between Pacer players and fans.

"I'm happy about two things for Christmas—great health and family and the opportunity to play again," O'Neal said. "I'm extremely happy. It has been a tough process. Now I can play the game I love so

much."

O'Neal was among five Pacers suspended for their parts in a brawl. Stern banished Ron Artest for the last 72 games of the season and suspended Stephen Jackson for 30 games, Anthony Johnson for five and Reggie Miller for one.

"I'm ready but I have to find a way to bottle up the energy and use it in a good way," O'Neal said. "I have to make sure we win games and when Stephen Jackson gets back, we can win a championship."

Five players and five spectators were charged with assault from the brawl.

The temporary restraining order issued by the federal court will allow O'Neal to play in three Indiana games before another hearing on Dec. 30.

"Our franchise is dedicated to surviving this incident and pursuing our goals," general manager Donnie Walsh said.

"This is the first good news we've had in some time on this issue. Were very happy

for Jermaine and were happy to have him back playing. We're hopeful this will become a more permanent decision in the next couple of weeks."

Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said O'Neal will be a starter on Christmas.

"We're fortunate to have a great player and a great person back on the court representing the Indiana Pacers," Carlisle said.

O'Neal would save \$1.64 million in lost salary by having his suspension reduced, provided the court does not rule later in favor of the NBA's appeal and make him sit out another 10 games.

"While we disagree with the courts decision and expect that ultimately Judge Daniels will find that the arbitrator had no authority in this matter, we will, of course, abide by the ruling of the court," NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik said in a statement.

The Pacers, who have lost eight of their

Coach fined for verbal abuse

NEW YORK—Detroit Pistons coach Larry Brown was fined \$15,000 here Thursday by the National Basketball Association for verbal abuse of an official following an 89-82 loss Wednesday to Chicago.

NBA vice president of basketball operations Stu Jackson imposed the fine upon Brown, coach of the reigning NBA champions as well as the 2004 Athens Olympic bronze medal US squad, for the incident at Auburn Hills, Michigan.

Brown had to be restrained from going after referee Anthony Jordan, whom Brown said he felt was ignoring him.

And Brown said he had a sense he was going to hear from the league in some form about his exuberance.

"The guy wouldn't talk to me during the game," Brown said after the match.

"I can't understand that. I wasn't being discourteous. Well, I was at the end and I suppose I'll hear about that."

By beating Detroit, the Bulls won their fifth game in a row, the team's longest streak since 1998, Michael Jordan's final season playing for the Bulls.

Chicago also snapped a nine-game losing skid to the Pistons.



CONTRACT SIGNING. Leo Shieh, president of Hitachi Phil. (second from left), shakes hands with Sonny Co of host Chiang Kai Shek for the sponsorship of 29th Hitachi Metro Manila Triang Lian Basketball League during the press conference held at the Megastar restaurant in Malate, Manila. Witnessing the event are Chiang Kai Shek athletic director Leoncio Chua (left) and Benedict Chua of Xavier School (right).

F1 changes will not affect Schumacher, Ferrari



SCHUMACHER: Same as ever

LONDON—Formula One may look very different in the next few seasons.

Bernie Ecclestone's control over a sport he's run for 25 years may be waning, with a rival group hoping to wrest control and run a series beginning in 2008.

Meanwhile, FIA president Max Mosley is pushing to cut costs in one of the world's most expensive sports.

"Why do teams need 100 people working on electronics?" he asked. "It takes 1,000 people to put two cars on the grid."

In 2005, engines will have to last for two races, and cars will be limited to the same set of tires for qualifying and race day. And Mosley will propose more cost cuts next month to team directors.

Will any of this matter to Michael Schumacher and Ferrari?

Don't count on it.

Ever since the German driver won his first of five straight titles in 2000—he has seven overall—F1 officials have been trying to slow him. They've restructured the points system, changed testing rules and banned hi-tech drivers' aids.

So what happened in 2004?

Schumacher was more dominant than ever. He won 13 of 18 races—teammate Rubens Barrichello won two more—in the least competitive season in F1 history.

Schumacher won 12 of the first 13 races and might have been 13-of-13 had he won in Monaco instead of going out while leading in a freak crash with Juan Pablo Montoya of Williams-BMW.

Only three non-Ferrari drivers managed a victory—Montoya in the season-ending

Brazilian GP, Jarno Trulli in Monaco and McLaren's Kimi Raikkonen in Belgium.

Schumacher will be 36 when the new season opens on March 6 in Melbourne, Australia. With a record 19 races on the calendar—the Turkish GP on Aug. 21 is the new event—Schumacher has even more chances.

With seven season titles, he is two ahead of the legendary Juan Manuel Fangio. With 83 career wins, he's 32 clear of Alain Prost and has surpassed Ayrton Senna by 42. And he shows no sign of quitting.

"I just race for the pleasure of racing, competing and winning," Schumacher said near the end of last season. "I guess Formula One will last quite a bit longer. As long as I'm competitive and enjoy racing, I will do it."

Barrichello (114 points) finished second behind Schumacher (148), with BAR-Hon-

da's Jenson Button third (85).

Ferrari ran away with its sixth straight constructors' title with 262 points followed by BAR-Honda (119), Renault (105), Williams-BMW (88), McLaren-Mercedes (69) and Sauber (34).

Ferrari and BAR enter 2005 with the same driver lineup, and Renault has added Giancarlo Fisichella to team with Fernando Alonso.

BMW-Williams and McLaren, the sport's dominant two teams until Ferrari took over, have juggled drivers.

Montoya has moved to McLaren from Williams, where he will team with Raikkonen. Ralf Schumacher departed Williams for Toyota and will drive with Trulli.

Mark Webber has joined Williams, with the second seat still open. AP

NFL squads battle for position

WASHINGTON—Entering the penultimate weekend of the National Football League season, seven of 16 playoff spots are decided, six clubs have been eliminated and 17 more are fighting to maintain their Super Bowl dreams.

American football's muddy playoff picture comes into focus with key games including Green Bay's Friday showdown with Minnesota for the NFC North crown and Carolina at Tampa Bay, two of 10 NFC title hopefuls with losing records.

"That's the way it goes," Tampa Bay coach John Gruden said. "I've been on teams where 9-7 isn't nearly good enough. Things go in cycles."

No team with a losing record has reached the NFL playoffs in a non-strike season, but it could happen this year with Arizona, Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, Tampa Bay and the New York Giants all at 5-9.

"I don't know how realistic it is but I do know we have a chance," said Washington coach Joe Gibbs.

Carolina, St. Louis and New Orleans are all 6-8 and level for the sixth and final NFC spot. But New Orleans has a Sunday date with NFC South winner Atlanta (11-3) and St. Louis plays host to Philadelphia (13-1) on Monday night.

Philadelphia lost star receiver Terrell Owens to a broken leg but the Eagles have been denied one victory shy of the Super Bowl the past three seasons and will be motivated to finally break through.

Carolina, which lost last February's Super Bowl to New England in the final seconds, can take a major step toward returning to the playoffs by winning at Tampa Bay. But many rivals are waiting for a sup.

Archrivals Washington and Dallas meet in Texas with the winner likely staying in the title fight into the final

weekend. Other 5-9 clubs' games feature Chicago at Detroit, Arizona at Seattle and the Giants at Cincinnati.

The Green Bay Packers visit Minnesota on Christmas Eve. The winner takes a division title and a home-field edge in the first playoff round. A loss would dim hopes for the Vikings, 8-6, while the Packers, 8-6, have clinched a spot.

"For some reason we're still in the playoffs," Packers quarterback Brett Favre said. "I don't know if that says a lot about us or it doesn't say a lot about the other teams."

The AFC playoff picture is much clearer. Pittsburgh (13-1), New England (12-2), Indianapolis (11-3) and San Diego (11-3) have clinched division crowns.

San Diego's visit to Indianapolis on Sunday could be historic as well as a playoff preview, with Colts' quarterback Peyton Manning needing one touchdown pass to match Dan Marino's single-season record of 48 touchdown passes. AFP

New demons hound baseball

WASHINGTON—Boston supporters could finally forget the "Curse of the Bambino" as the Red Sox ended an 86-year championship drought, but 2004 closed with Major League Baseball haunted by another curse—steroids.

Revelations of grand jury testimony in early December featured an admission of doping by Jason Giambi and a confession from record-setting home run slugger Barry Bonds that he took supplements from the scandal-ridden BALCO labs.

San Francisco Giants star Bonds, who said he did not know the nature of the substances he ingested, hit a single-season record 73 home runs in 2001 and has a career total of 703 homers—53 shy of breaking Hank Aaron's all-time American homer record and just 11 shy of matching Babe Ruth for second on the list.

For a game where centuries of statistics are meticulously kept, Bonds has raised a cloud of suspicion over hallowed records.

"I think we need to do everything we can to put everyone's mind at ease about players using steroids," New York Mets pitcher Tom Glavine said.

"We need to wipe away as much doubt about this as we possibly can. Anything we can do to take away people's suspicions, we need to do that."

The scandal led owners and the players union to agree on a tougher drug policy after a first-ever season of testing for steroids, a program ridiculed as inadequate by World Anti-Doping Agency officials.

"I will leave no stone unturned in accomplishing our goal of zero tolerance by the start of spring training and am confident we will achieve this goal," major league commissioner Bud Selig said.

The doping scandal overshadowed one of the best stories in baseball history as the Red Sox captured their first World Series title since 1918, sweeping the St. Louis Cardinals in four games to capture the best-of-seven showdown.

"I don't think words can describe what this means," Red Sox standout Jason Varitek said. "There are a lot of people who are going to be able to die happy now."

Derek Lowe became the first pitcher in baseball history to win the last game in all three playoff rounds, forever banishing the



BONDS: Steroid scandal

Curse of the Bambino—a jinx dating to the 1919 sale of legend Ruth to the rival New York Yankees.

"We weren't alive back then," Red Sox leadoff hitter Johnny Damon said. "Some of our grandparents weren't even alive. We didn't care about it. We knew we were able to do something about it." The Red Sox needed the greatest comeback in baseball history simply to reach the Series, losing the first three games of the American League final to the Yankees before advancing, the first club in history to escape an 0-3 hole.

"No more going to Yankee Stadium and listening to (chants of) '1918'—finally," Lowe said.

Boston became only the fourth team in 100 years to win without ever trailing in a game, a fitting finish for a club that suffered several near-miss title efforts, the most agonizing coming in 1986 just one out from a crown.

"There have been so many people in their 90s who said, 'I just want to live long enough to see one championship before I die.' This is for them," Red Sox chair Tom Werner said.

The Montreal Expos, wards of the league's other club owners for two years, were relocated to Washington and renamed the Nationals. AFP



SNOW CONTEST: Akira Sasaki of Japan competes in men's slalom FIS Ski World Cup in Flachau. Giorgio Rocca of Italy won before second Rainer Schoenfelder of Austria and third Alois Vogl of Germany. Sasaki finished tenth.

Federer, Russians dominate tennis world

LONDON—Roger Federer staged a single-handed takeover of men's tennis in 2004. In the women's game the Russians seized control.

Anastasia Myskina fired the first salvo for Russia at Roland Garros in June, becoming the first Russian woman to win a grand slam title.

Four weeks later Siberian-born teenager Maria Sharapova demolished Serena Williams to win Wimbledon and in September Svetlana Kuznetsova powered to victory at the US Open.

As the year drew to a close, Myskina inspired Russia to their first Fed Cup title against France.

Federer's emergence to fill the vacuum left by the retirement of Pete Sampras stamped an indelible

mark on the year.

The Swiss, who has a steely core to complement an unrivaled arsenal of weapons, captivated fans across the globe as he racked up a 74-6 singles record.

By winning the Australian and US Opens, and retaining his Wimbledon crown in between, he became the first player since Mats Wilander in 1988 to win three grand slam titles in a year.

He was unbeaten against players in the top 10, matched Sampras' 23-match winning streak and set a record of 13 consecutive wins in finals—not bad considering he does not even have a coach.

The year was just weeks old when Federer dethroned Andy Roddick as world number one by

marching to the Australian Open 6-1 against Marat Safin.

The 24-year-old then won tournaments in Dubai, Hamburg and Halle before breezing into an eagerly-awaited final against Roddick at Wimbledon.

Further wins in the finals of the Toronto Masters and Bangkok gave Federer an 8-1 lead over the American by the year-end as talk of a Sampras/Agassi style rivalry proved premature.

The women's season began in predictable fashion when Justine Henin-Hardenne beat fellow Belgian Kim Clijsters to win the Australian Open and confirm her No. 1 ranking.

However, apart from an Olympic gold medal, the year turned sour

for Henin-Hardenne. By the time she lost the top ranking at the US Open the Russian tide was proving unstoppable.

Myskina's 6-1, 6-2 victory over compatriot Elena Dementieva in the French Open final was a non-event for the fans, but it was a watershed for Russian tennis with thousands waiting to greet the winner on her return to Moscow.

Normal service appeared to have been resumed at Wimbledon where defending champion Serena Williams powered to the final for the loss of just one set.

However she was comprehensively outplayed by the dazzling, 17-year-old Sharapova in the final as the aura that had surrounded her in the previous two years faded. Reuters



SHARAPOVA: Highlight of Russian charge

Football: Underdogs thrive amid racism, game-fixing scandals

LONDON—Greece and FC Porto made it a great year for underdogs.

Never having won a game in a major championship, Greece overcame 100-1 odds to win the Euro 2004 title.

And 50-1 outsider Porto—not Real Madrid or AC Milan—won the Champions League.

The surprises weren't necessarily a great advertisement for the world's most popular game.

The grind of year-round soccer seemed

to wear down the world's biggest stars and weaken the most powerful national teams and clubs. Greece and Porto were tough to beat, rather than great entertainers.

Off the pitch, the picture was even less uplifting.

Racist chants, corruption and match-fixing stained the game, while two stars received lengthy doping-related bans.

A bomb threat in December forced the evacuation of Real Madrid's 70,000-seat Santiago Bernabeu stadium, bringing a

stark reminder of the threat of terrorism.

Racism marred a so-called friendly in Spain, where fans bellowed monkey chants at England's black players. Similar incidents occurred in England, Hungary and the Netherlands.

Spain's national coach, Luis Aragones, kept his job despite a racial slur about Arsenal's French striker Thierry Henry. Former Man United manager Ron Atkinson quit as a TV commentator after making a derogatory comment about Marcel Desailly.

The Czech Republic and Portugal launched corruption investigations, and match-fixing marred soccer in South Africa. A bribery scandal surrounded one of the stadiums being built for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The English Premier League had two high-profile drug cases. Manchester United's Rio Ferdinand was suspended for eight months—he missed Euro 2004—for failing to show up for a drug test. Chelsea's Adrian Mutu was banned for seven months after

testing positive for cocaine.

Italy's Francesco Totti and Senegalese World Cup striker El Hadji Diouf were each banned for three games for spitting in the face of opponents.

A European Champions League game was called off at half time with blood streaming down his face, the target of an object thrown from the stands.

In South America, fan violence caused the death of a 15-year-old boy in Colombia. AP

Atlanta QB signs richest NFL contract

FLOWERY BRANCH, Georgia—Michael Vick agreed to a 10-year contract worth more than \$100 million with the Atlanta Falcons that also guarantees the quarterback a National Football League-record \$37 million in bonuses, an official close to the negotiations said Thursday.

Vick's contract surpasses the \$98-million deal Indianapolis quarterback Peyton Manning signed in March and makes him one of the top-five best-paid players in the NFL. Manning was guaranteed \$34.5 million in bonuses.

The deal was first reported by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on its website.

The official, who requested anonymity, said Vick reached incentives in his original contract, a six-year, \$62-million deal, that would have allowed him to void the 2005 and

2006 seasons next month. Had he done so, the 24-year-old Vick would have become an unrestricted free agent on March 2.

"We've said on numerous occasions that this franchise is committed to bringing a world championship to the city of Atlanta, the state of Georgia, as well as to building a sustainable winning organization consistently in the hunt," Falcons owner Arthur Blank said in a statement. "Today's contract extension for Michael, in our opinion, moves us closer to achieving those goals."

Vick, chosen Wednesday to his second Pro Bowl—the NFL's season-ending all-star game, needs 80 yards to break the single-season record for rushing by a quarterback, set by Chicago's Bobby Douglass in 1972.

In a Week 8 victory at Denver, Vick became the first player in league history to rush for 100 yards and pass for 250 in a single game. **AP**



DEL MONTE RULES

Under-14 footballers of the Benguet State University and the Del Monte Football Club compete in a tense, action-filled final of the PFF Red Ribbon football festival at the Ateneo pitch in Katipunan. Del Monte FC won the match, 1-0, to bag the Under-14 crown.

Buhain ready to tackle thankless job 4 nabbed in shooting of soccer head coach

By Musong R. Castillo

ERIC Buhain will vacate his table at the Philippine Sports Commission after the holidays and will assume a task that no one has actually won public adulation for.

He takes over from Eduardo Villanueva as top brass of the Games and Amusements Board, an agency in the government that is a thankless job just like all the others.

A successful amateur swimmer and the one in charge of amateur sports during his time with the PSC, Buhain will tackle an entirely different field when he leads the government agency that supervises professional sports in the country.

"We (political appointees) are put in places where the honorable President (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) feels we can be most effective," said Buhain, who, like all other political appointees, tendered his courtesy resignation last July 30.

"We serve at her (President Arroyo) pleasure. We don't actually ask why we are put in this agency or that, or why our resignation was accepted."

Married to the former Eileen Ermita, the representative of Batangas' first dis-

trict, the 34-year-old Buhain plans to streamline operations of the GAB, but not before he sees its mandate and the limitations of its laws.

"I want to make it (GAB) as efficient as possible. To be able to address all the problems concerning professional sports and maybe improve it," Buhain said.

"There is not much difference between the GAB and the PSC, because I will be dealing with athletes also."

Even before he could occupy the GAB post, Buhain has been getting telephone calls from athletes of various sports, urging their gripes and looking for solutions.

"From pro golf, to [pro] cycling to [pro] boxing, I have heard of some of the stories through calls that have somehow made their way [to me] even though I have yet to assume the post," Buhain added.

Buhain, whose highlight as a swimmer was a six-gold medal haul in the 1991 Southeast Asian Games in Manila, formally takes over Villanueva at the start of next year after Malacañang had named Butch Ramirez as officer-in-charge of the PSC.



BUHAIN: From PSC to GAB

Once he assumes office, Buhain will look at the rules concerning National Sports Associations (NSAs) that handle professional tournaments like golf, tennis, cycling and basketball, to name a few.

"I know that these agencies have clouds over their respective sports, but the rules and regulations laid out by the

GAB way before should strictly be followed.

"Directions and policies will have to be enforced. Taking over from these NSAs is not in my mind, but to see to it that the interests of the GAB, the government as a whole, is followed."

The NGAR, the national association for golf, runs the Philippine Open, an event that is the oldest national championship in Asia participated in by pros from all over the world.

He talked of golf in general, and said that he will see to it that the mess in the Professional Golfers Association of the Philippines is resolved at the soonest possible time.

Boxing controversies that have remained unresolved is high in his list of priorities as well as pro tennis and cycling events.

"Boxers have died out there, some of them were not paid by the promoter. Problems like these will be addressed."

A new task is up for Buhain in the new year. He'll have to enjoy this holiday break before, pardon the pun, he plunges into a world that will surely take up his time.

4 nabbed in shooting of soccer head coach

BOGOTA, Colombia—Authorities arrested two men and two women suspected in the shooting of Copa Libertadores winning coach Luis Fernando Montoya, who is paralyzed from the neck down, officials said Thursday.

Montoya, who led Once Caldas to the South American club championship earlier this year, "has not shown any movement of the body and is using a ventilator for breathing," doctors said in a statement Thursday.

Montoya was shot twice Wednesday as he tried to protect his wife whom robbers outside their home in Caldas, 280 kilometers (170 miles) northwest of the capital of Bogota. Doctors said one of the bullets struck him in the neck, hitting his spinal column and leaving him paralyzed from the neck down. He is in intensive care at a hospital in Medellin, Colombia.

President Alvaro Uribe said he was pained by the attack, and called it a "national tragedy."

Police on Thursday identified the suspected shooter as Javier Alonso Calle, 37, and said he was arrested along with an accomplice an hour after the attack.

Authorities also have detained two women who allegedly followed Montoya's wife, Adriana Herrera, back to her home after seeing her withdrawing cash from an automated teller machine. They then apparently contacted Calle and his friend who approached her for the cash.

Montoya, who was inside his home, noticed what was happening and rushed out to help.

"The men stopped me and demanded the money. Luis Fernando then put his hand into the bag and the guy probably thought he was going to pull a gun, so he fired," Herrera said Thursday.

Once Caldas achieved one of the biggest upsets in Copa Libertadores history in June by beating six-time champion Boca Juniors of Argentina in the two-leg final. **AP**

Dimakiling, Army blasts Kaya, bags crown

INTERNATIONAL Master Richard Bitoon defeated Fide Master Oliver Dimakiling of Davao City in tiebreak points to win the championship trophy of the just-concluded 2004 CDO Mixed Masters chess tournament Thursday night at the Ganador Grill in Cagayan de Oro City.

The former Southwestern University stand-out Bitoon settled for a fighting draw against GenSan bet Ferdinand Leysa with the white pieces after 45 pushes of a Sicilian skirmish in the ninth and final round to score 7.5 points, the same output of Dimakiling.

Bitoon and Dimakiling split the combined prizes of P12,000 in the three-day affair organized by national arbiter Lorenzo "Jun" Quizon.

It was a wonderful Christmas gift for 28-year-old Navy man Bitoon, who earlier placed second and fourth in the 1st Misanis Occidental National Open in Oroquieta City and Iligan Open. Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

ARMY banked on the game-long brilliance of goalkeeper Edward Sacapano to blank highly touted Kaya FC, 3-0, and win the NCRFA Globe Handy Phone Super Cup football crown Wednesday at the PhilSports Complex field in Pasig City.

Sacapano fouled no less than 12 dangerous Kaya attempts as Army swept all its six assignments in the tournament organized by the National Capital Region Football Association and sponsored by Globe Handy Phone.

Nestorio Margarse gave the Army-men a 1-0 halftime lead after scoring in the 12th minute. Then Rocky Garcia and Luisito Brillantes knocked two more goals in the 32nd and 57th minutes, respectively.

Far Eastern University clinched third place by shutting out University of Santo Tomas, 2-0, in an earlier match.

NCRFA president Jose Vito B. Bor-



NCRFA president Jose Vito B. Borromeo presenting the trophy to Army after winning the Globe Handy Phone Super Cup Wednesday by beating Kaya, 3-0. Also shown are jubilant members of the champion squad.

romeo and general secretary Jojo Rodriguez awarded the trophies to the champions and runners-up while adidas sports marketing manager Goody

Custodio presented the adidas MVP award to Army's Adonis Torres.

Adidas also gave the members of the Army squad prizes in kind.

Rapid champ heads MCC tourney list Crash spoils Aguilar Indon stint

ASEAN rapid champion Jan Nigel Galan of Valenzuela City and Divine Word College student Alex Virtualla of Calapan City lead the early entries in the Metropolitan Chess Club (MCC) unrated active chess, which starts at 10 a.m. tomorrow and in the non-master event set the next day, Dec. 27, at the 4/F of the J & F Divine Building in Quezon City.

The unrated tourney is open to all beginners, amateurs and rated players with active ratings not over 1800. The winner in this event will receive the top prize of P3,000.

Interested parties are advised to register at least before the tournament starts or call MCC at 4358412 and 0916-8521069. Marlon Bernardino, Contributor



AGUILAR: Settles for second

SENTUL, INDONESIA—A mild incident denied 13-year-old Bosch Intelco protégé Marti Aguilar the Rotax Max Junior crown recently in the final round of the Asian Karting Open Championships here.

Aguilar needed to simply finish the race to have a decent shot at the crown.

But with only 3 laps to go, he was then running second to erstwhile leader Rama Danindro of Indonesia when a backmarker, Johan Adzmi of Malaysia, made an error and collided with the two, forcing them into retirement.

With the non-finish, Zulfikhar Rahmi of Indonesia won the Rotax Juniors crown while Aguilar ended the overall runner-up, losing the chance to be the Asian representative to the 2005 World karting finals

in Canary Islands Spain—whch is considered karting's equivalent to F1.

Aguilar, flown here through new Bosch Intelco logistics partner Malaysian Airlines with the support of Oakley, Bosch, Accel sports, PR Autosport, Funbi, AER Const. and Natural Treasures, qualified seventh in a 20-kart grid but his big fighting heart steered him to second and third place finishes in Saturdays heats and almost had the title at hand following his runner-up finish in the pre-finals.

"I did my best, its just sad I had to lose the championship due to a racing incident. It would have been a great opportunity for me to represent the Philippines and the Bosch-Intelco team in the World Finals," said Aguilar.

Young tennis prospects fly for Australian holiday treat

FRANCIS Casey Alcantara and Bambi Zoleta, the winners of the boys' singles and girls' singles in the inaugural leg of the Asian 14-Under Series held in Manila last September, leave on Dec. 26 for a rare Australian treat.

Seven boys and 7 girls from all over Asia will join the 23-day all-expenses-paid trip to Australia sponsored by the Australian Open.

During the trip to Australia, the Asian 14-Under team will play 4 tournaments, including the Asian 14-Under Masters, before enjoying the first four days of the 2005 Australian Open.

Alcantara and Zoleta, both 12-year-olds, will have their first stop in Sydney. The tour will then proceed to Melbourne for the last two tournaments and the Australian Open.

The Boys' Team is being coached by Chris Cuarto of the Philippines while Rudhika Tulpule of India is the coach for the Girls Team. The team's uniforms will be provided by Accel.

Ballad voted favorite Christmas tune

LONDON—A bittersweet ballad, awash in drink, drugs and regret was voted Britain's favorite Christmas song in a poll released recently.



POGUES. Tender tale of enduring love.

They Know It's Christmas?," came second in the poll. This year's remake of the song was in fifth place.

The Top 10:

1. "Fairytale Of New York," The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, 1987;
2. "Do They Know It's Christmas?," Band Aid, 1984;
3. "Last Christmas," Wham!, 1984;
4. "Merry Xmas Everybody," Slade, 1973;
5. "Do They Know It's Christmas?," Band Aid 20, 2004;
6. "All I Want For Christmas is You," Mariah Carey, 1994;
7. "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday," Wizard 1973;
8. "White Christmas," Bing Crosby, 1977;
9. "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)," John Lennon, 1972, and
10. "Stay Another Day" East 17 1994.

Insults

Opening with the line: "It was Christmas Eve, babe, in the drunk tank," the song features Pogues singer Shane MacGowan and Kirsty MacColl swapping insults in a foul-mouthed but ultimately tender tale of enduring love.

Band Aid's 1984 charity single, "Do

Cage talks about new marriage

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Nicolas Cage said recently he's reluctant to say he's happy in his new marriage to a 20-year-old former sushi waitress.

"I want to say that I'm content," Cage told reporters in the Taiwanese capital, Taipei.

"If I say I'm happy, that's too fragile of a word," Cage said. "I'm afraid someone will take the happiness away."

The "Leaving Las Vegas" star recently married Alice Kim, his



CAGE. Afraid someone will take the happiness away.

third wife. He was previously married to Lisa Marie Presley and Patricia Arquette lasted six years.

First meeting

The actor, who is twice his wife's age, said he met Kim at a Los Angeles nightclub. On their first meeting, she abruptly left after chatting for just five minutes. Cage said he wrote her a note asking why she walked away and he gave her his phone number.

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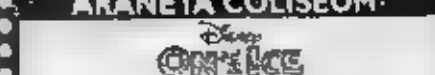
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	AISHITE IMASU
2	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
	PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3	11:35 2:00 4:25 6:50 9:15
	LASTIKMAN
4	10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10
	SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
	MANO PO 3
7	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
	ENTENG KABISOTE
8	11:35 2:00 4:25 6:50 9:15
	LASTIKMAN
9	11:55 2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15
	Opens Soon!

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	SIGAW
3	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
	PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4	10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00
	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
	ENTENG KABISOTE
6	10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00
	MANO PO 3
7	11:05 1:20 3:35 5:50 8:05

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TANDEM-1	SUGAL
TANDEM-2	PANAGHOY SA SUBA
TIMES	SPY • LINDA CRISTINA

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ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KUYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	
ACT-4	HANGANG KALANAN PAPURY
CORNET A	SALAT SA LIDYAN
CORNET B	A MANI APART
QUEZON-1	BERTOLDO NG PUTAN
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	AISHITE IMASU (1841)
B	CLOSED
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI LA PLAZA MALL	8:35-20:15, 8:35-10:15 TO 10
CHERRY 2344	NATIONAL TREASURE / BRIDGE JONES / SPIRIT OF THE GLASS / SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
PREMIERE THEATRE	THE SECRET OF THE TOWER

CAINTA RIZAL

STA LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 13)
CINEMA-1	KALABRI
CINEMA-2	SALAT
CINEMA-3	ONE MISSED CALL
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	POLAR EXPRESS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-6	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-7	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-8	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	WANDERLO & RAMAR
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ALEXANDER
CINEMA-11 (DTS)	BAU SANTA
CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-14	HONEY
CINEMA-15	B CHIT PUN

LORES

CINEMA 2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA 3	KUYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMA 01C - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-1	PASTORAL
CINEMA-2	BRIDGE JONES
CINEMA-4	POLAR EXPRESS

UNIWE COASTAL MALL

(PAHANGUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KUYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-4	MEN IN BLACK II

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2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	7 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN	8 MANO PO 3
4 SIGAW	9 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 AISHITE IMASU	10 MANO PO 3

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1 SIGAW	5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 AISHITE IMASU	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
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LASTIKMAN R13 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:10	AISHITE IMASU 1841 PG-13 12:00 3:35 5:50 8:05 10:20	SIGAW PG-13 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:10

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	Balison	BALISONG
	Am I'll Funny	FUNNY
	If You Had My Love	IFUHADMYLV
	Jarvis From the Block	JENYFROMBLOCK
	Let's Get Loud	GETLOUD
	Play	PLAY
	Baby Boy	BAVBOY
	Crazy In Love	CRZYINLV
	Let's La Vida Loca	LAVIDALOCA
	She Bangs	SHEBANGS

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	A Love To Share	100126
	Jagatraw Umulan	100140
	Balison	100937
South Border	Playa	100813
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AGUSTIN. Wants to experience a real winter wonderland.

Marvin Agustin, other celebrities cite their favorite Christmas symbols

By Jocelyn Valle

MARVIN Agustin dreams of a "white" Christmas. "That's because snow is my favorite Yuletide symbol," he shares. "I've seen snow when I went to Japan, but it wasn't Christmas then. I spent the holidays in the States last year, but it only

snowed in New York after I left for California. I hope I can experience a real winter wonderland *talaga* the next time I travel!"

Decorations

Marvin also enjoys the sight of a Christmas tree, particularly the one that his mother decorates. "Oa kasi s'ya sa mga palamuti kaya nakaka-alis," he laughs.

Jay Aquitania also likes Christmas trees. "It is where we put our Christmas cards," he explains. Fellow newbie Jill Yulo agrees with Jay's choice. "Our Christmas tree is special to me because it's been with my family since I was 10 years old," says the ABS-CBN talent, who will turn 15 on Dec. 28. "Too bad, though, that I only get one gift for both Christmas and my birthday."

For Clara Sotto, the Belen (a tableau of Christ's birth) is the best representation of the Yuletide season. "It's Jesus'

birthday, and He's the star of the season," she reasons.

Drew Arellano declares that his favorite Christmas symbol is the star. "It's placed on top of the Christmas tree, that's why everybody looks at it. It symbolizes guidance. *Kailangan natin 'yan sa buhay*," he stresses.

Star

"Lastikman's" Dando Barrios agrees. "But, I don't have a star in my condo yet

MARVIN A2-1

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SATURDAYSpecial

Indie music dominates music scene in 2004

By Noelani Torre

THE YEAR 2004 witnessed the slow winding down of everyone's enthusiasm for all things acoustic, a resurgence of energy in the independent music scene, and a rise in copyright infringement activities (otherwise known as piracy) despite all the dramatic measures taken against them.

Nevertheless, it's been a productive year, especially for younger musicians like Bamboo Mañalac, Kitchie Nadal, Sarah Geronimo and Erik Santos.

Older and more established stars have also had a good year, however. Regine Velasquez's "Covers" (Viva) turned platinum less than a month after its release, and Ogie Alcasid's "I Am a Singer" also did well in the charts. And

the self-titled "Soul Diva," Nina, released "Smile" at the beginning of the year.

Frontman

Bamboo, former vocalist of Rivermaya, is now the frontman of a new rock band called, er, Bamboo which released their debut album, "Noypi," earlier this year.

The band walked away with five wins at this year's NU Rock Awards: band/artist of the year, song of the year (the ubiquitous "Noypi"), vocalist of the year (Bamboo), drummer of the year (Vic Mercado), and listener's choice. They've also been nominated for best band (Philippines) at the upcoming MTV Asia Awards, along with four other bands, including—gasp!—Rivermaya. (Now that would be interesting to watch—and if you want to get your own two cents' worth in, you can vote at the MTV Asia website.)

Another former vocalist of a well-known band (Mojoly)—Kitchie Nadal—also released her debut album this year.

The self-titled disc also has Bamboo's Vic Mercado on drums, and its songs have been enjoying heavy airplay for sometime now.

Sarah Geronimo and Erik Santos, both products of talent searches, also released albums this year, and their songs have proven to be popular with all kinds of audiences (though Christian Bautista, who was eliminated from Santos' competition, seems to be more conspicuous than Santos).

As for acoustic groups, well, they're still out there, and they're still raking in the chips, but they no longer dominate the scene the way they did last year.

Acoustic

Nyoy Volante and company (Cocoy Aranas, Glenn Dalit and Jerome Nuñez) released their second album this year "NV&M," another acoustic collection of covers and originals.

Pop-rock band Sugarfree also released its sophomore album, "Dramachine." A successful follow-up to their winning debut, the album signals better things to come from this group in the future.

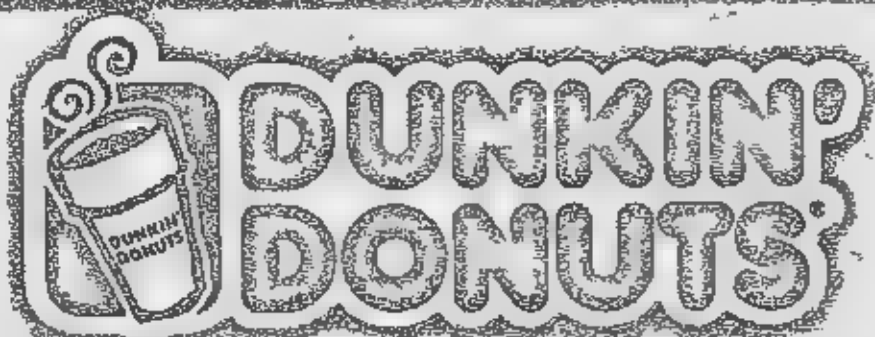
It's the indie scene, however, that has been particularly active this year. The general public wouldn't have heard of most of the groups with releases under independent labels, but some of these—like Imago and Radioactive Sago Project—have already established themselves.

The two groups were once under Viva, but have now found new, freer lives with indie labels: Imago and Sago released "Take 2" (Thirdline) and "Urban Gulaman" (Terno), respectively.

The piracy problem continues to nag at the industry, however, and not even the struggling indies are spared.



BAMBOO. Walked away with five wins at the recent NU Rock awards.



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TURNER.
65th
birthday.

Tina Turner still
rocking in her
adopted homeland

GENEVA—Tina Turner, who has just celebrated her 65th birthday, is enjoying her quiet life in Switzerland, but she has no plans to retire from performing.

The rock diva, who four years ago completed her final world tour, still performs live in Switzerland, her latest was on the day she turned 65, the Swiss weekly *Schweizer Illustrierte* said. She has no plans to leave her adopted homeland in the Alps.

Indian goddess

Turner, who has lived for 10 years in the exclusive Zurich district of Kuesnacht, recently put out a new CD, and will appear as the title character in a new film, "The Goddess."

The practicing Buddhist will play the Indian goddess Shakti, her first acting role since starring alongside Mel Gibson in 1985's "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome."

"Switzerland is wonderful," Turner told the magazine. "I love the people, the lakes, the mountains—simply everything!"

Turner, who was born Anna Mae Bullock on Nov. 26, 1939, in Brownsville, Tennessee, has lived in Switzerland since 1994 with Erwin Bach, a former EMI record executive and her partner of 17 years. They also have a ski chalet in Klosters, the luxurious Swiss alpine resort. AP



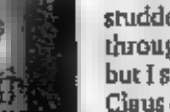
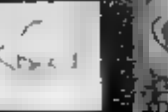
AQUINO. Stopped believing in Santa Claus at age five.

Marvin . . . From page A2-1

because I don't have Christmas decorations in there," he offers. "Puro toys lang. My mother loves to spruce up the house, but she lives in Tarlac with my siblings. But, I make it a point to visit them, especially on Christmas."

Anna Capri is fascinated with the jolly old man in red. "Santa Claus symbolizes gift-giving. I love presents. After all, there's an inner child in all of us," she grins.

Carlo Aquino, who's in the cast of the star-studded "Mano Po 3," concurs. "Kids go through that stage of believing in Santa Claus, but I stopped at age five. We still have a Santa Claus doll at home, though," he shares.



FAMILY TIES

Vilma Santos dotes on son Luis

By Remy Umerez

A WEEK before Christmas, the Star for All Seasons, Vilma Santos, shared with us her thoughts on son Luis and her first film in three years, "Mano Po 3":

She is thankful for the support of her family. When "Mano Po 3" was offered to her, Vilma sought the advice of husband Ralph and son Luis. They read the script, and exchanged views on scenes that they found objectionable. In everything she does, communication lines with her son are open.

Fulfilling task

For Vilma, raising her sons Luis and Ryan is a most fulfilling task. "My parents taught me to be God-fearing, respectful, responsible and

law-abiding. Luis has never given me headaches. I am very liberal, but once you betray my trust, *mag-ingat ka!* Scorpio trait *uo*. Luis knows that, *at binusog ko siya sa pangaral*. I always tell him that he is old enough to differentiate right from wrong, so he should never do something that he'd regret later on," she says.

No secrets

Although Luis has his own condo, he stays with Vi most of the time. There are no secrets between mother and son—according to Vi, Luis tells her *everything!* On a few occasions, he'd introduce a girl to Vilma, and she'd know instantly if she was special to him or not.

Vilma observes that Luis is more focused now. He dreams of owning his own restaurant-bar. And she's surprised at how thrifty Luis has become—a trait that the actress also pos-

sesses.

The Lipa City mayor ends the year with her filmfest entry, "Mano Po 3." In this last compilation of Tsinoy tales, Vilma is cast as a crusader, a mother of three children and supportive wife to Paul Yang, her devoted husband of 23 years. Then, her first love, Michael Lim (now a widower) resurfaces, and she finds herself in love again.

Three reasons

Vilma cited three reasons why she accepted "Mano Po 3": It gave her the opportunity to work with Christopher de Leon again; she couldn't say no to Mother Lily, who has produced some of Vilma's unforgettable movies ("Sister Stella L," "Broken Marriage" and "Relasyon"), and the film's interesting story centers on a family that collapses due to infidelity.



SANTOS. Couldn't say no to Mother Lily Monteverde.

New York critics pick 'Sideways' as top film

NEW

YORK—"Sideways" has taken another step forward with critics, winning top honors from the New York Film Critics Online.

The group named the comedy, about mismatched best friends on a wine-tasting road trip, as the year's best film. Two of the movie's stars, Thomas Haden Church and Virginia Madsen, won the supporting actor and actress categories.

Jamie Foxx was named best actor for his uncanny portrayal of Ray Charles in "Ray," and Imelda Staunton won the best actress award for playing a housekeeper who secretly performs abortions in 1950s England in "Vera Drake."

Epic

Martin Scorsese was named the top director for the Howard Hughes epic, "The Aviator," and Charlie Kaufman won screenplay honors for "External Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," about a lovelorn man who wants to erase his ex-girlfriend from his memory.

The Los Angeles Film Critics Association also chose "Sideways" as the year's best film, and the National Board of Review of listed it among the top 10 movies of the year.

Other picks

Other 2004 picks from the New York Film Critics Online, composed of writers who are either exclusively online or who are broadcast or print critics with a strong online presence:

Cinematography: "Hero," Christopher Doyle.

Animated film: "The Incredibles."

Foreign language film: "The Motorcycle Diaries."

Documentary: (tie) "Broadway: The Golden Age" and "Super Size Me."

Breakthrough performance: Topher Grace ("P.S." and "In Good Company.")

Debut director: Joshua Marston ("Maria Full of Grace"). AP



FOXX. Best actor for "Ray."

Arts and culture

From page A2-6

view of life is significantly enriched. Why can't viewers in the Philippines be given the pleasure of savoring the best that the cultural world has to offer?

Excitement

The lively arts, history, biography, cultural anthropology, the richness of past artistic traditions and the excitement of modern-day innovations—these are rich and rewarding inputs that we should all have access to and benefit from.

The enjoyment of art and culture should not be restricted to a privileged and moneyed few, but should be made available to all cable TV subscribers. Cable channels specializing in this would make for much better and inspiring viewing than all those practically useless channels in strange languages that crowd our cable TV spectrum.

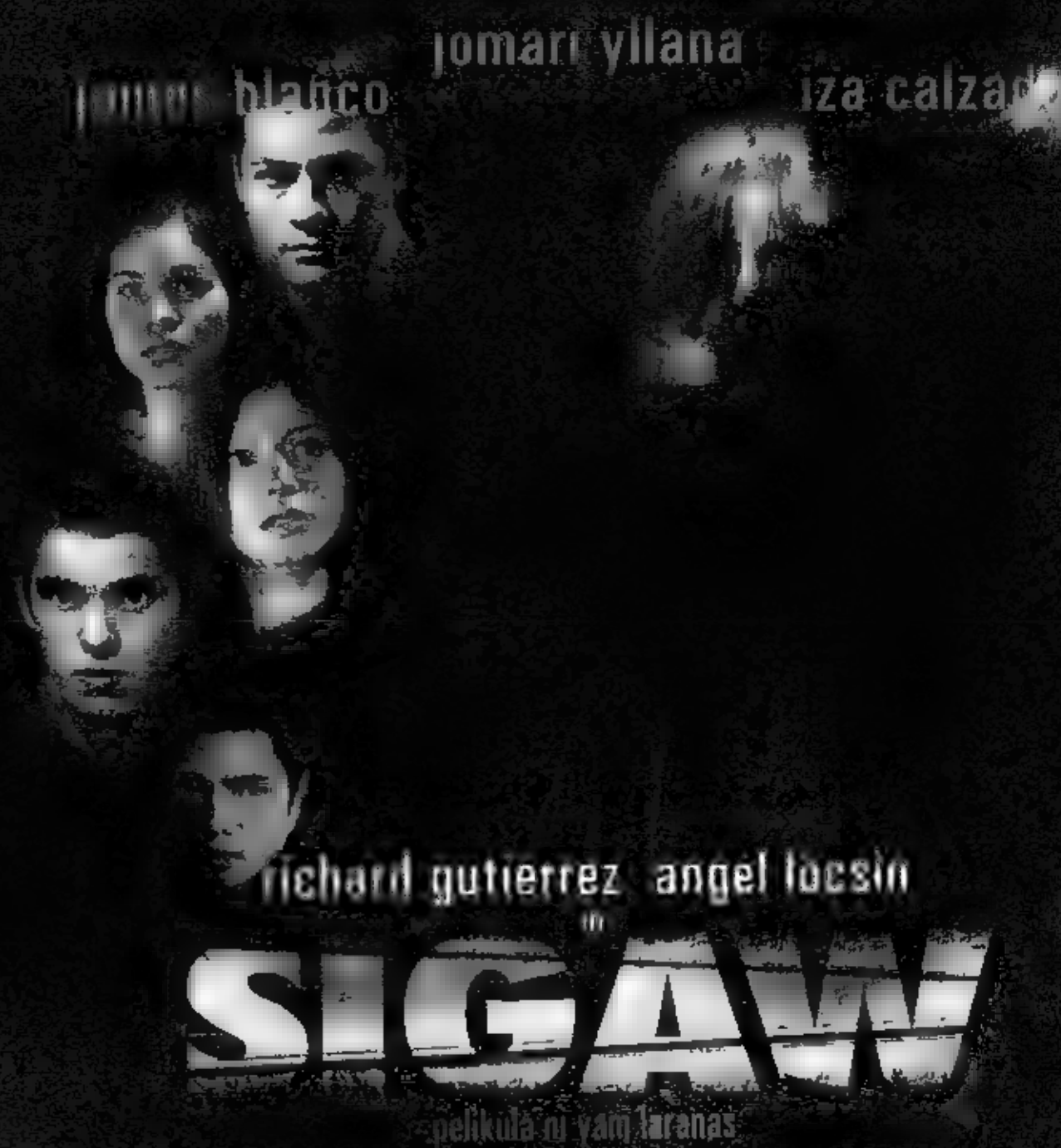
Reaching out

Even if you aren't an arts and culture buff you should give the field a go on TV, because good art has a great way of reaching out to viewers in a subtly compelling and affecting way. Just give the arts a chance to get to you and they will. —And you'll be a better person for it.

So, do join our call for arts and culture channels on our cable TV spectrum. We all need the illuminating, inspiring insights that the arts can bring, especially at this time, when darkness and despair hulk over our political and entertainment landscape.

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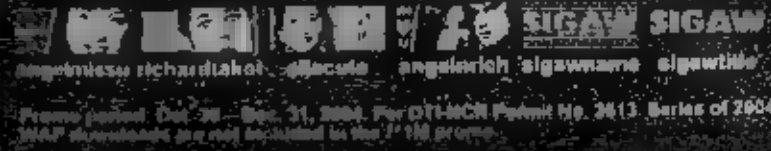
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2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	2 ENTENG KABISOTE	2 AISHITE MASU	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	2 AISHITE MASU
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	3 LASTIKMAN	7 ENTENG KABISOTE	3 SIGAW
4 ENTENG KABISOTE	4 HAPPY TOGETHER	4 AISHITE MASU	4 HAPPY TOGETHER	4 HAPPY TOGETHER
5 MANO PO 3		5 SIGAW	5 MANO PO 3	5 MANO PO 3

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
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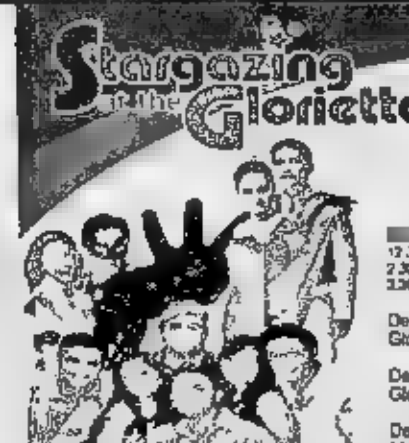


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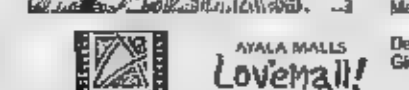
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24

SATURDAY Special

DECEMBER 25, 2004

Magic tricks exposed

By Nestor U. Torre

WHEN I was a kid, one of the best treats I looked forward to was going to a magic show with my folks. I was in awe of the performing magicians

as they pulled sundry animals out of hats and boxes, cut comely women in half, made grown men vanish in front of our eyes, put members of the audience in a trance to make them float in mid-air—etc.

What strange, alien world did these awesome magi of the impossible come from? What inexplicable powers they possessed! Like many other children in the audience, I wished I could be as preter-

MOVIE GUIDE

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naturally potent as they were.

But, when I tried to duplicate even their simplest tricks at home, I fumbled and flubbed, and even my pet puppy sniffed in petulant disdain.

Psychic

Years later, I watched even more dazzling prestidigitators strut their psychic stuff in posh venues both here and abroad, and I was even more dazzled.

One time, I volunteered to be the object of a name magician's expert moves, and I was stunned when he correctly announced the numbers that made up my TIN code, in exactly the right sequence! Did he have an eye inside my pocket, or what? And, on cable TV, I gawked at the sight of internationally famous magicians like David Copperfield and David Blaine, who made entire skyscrapers disappear. What in the world was going on?

New show

Of course, we suspected that it was all really polished and expert trickery, but I couldn't prove it—until I recently watched several telecasts of the new show, "Magicians' Biggest Tricks Finally Revealed," telecast Monday nights on Star World.

One by one, professional magicians exposed the complex ways they have been able to pull the wool over our eyes for centuries.

The rabbit pulled out of a hat was there all along, hiding in a secret compartment in the magician's signature chapeaux.

The lady floating in mid-air was made to levitate, not by the magician's gravity-defying powers, but by a rising mechanical platform that the audience couldn't see!

Cut in half

The woman cut in half or stabbed by swords was shown hiding in a small, secret compartment, safe and snug as a bug in a rug.

All in all, I've seen dozens of magic acts exposed as elaborate tricks on the show. For some reason, however, knowing all about the trickery hasn't drastically diminished my fascination with magic.

—Only, this time, I'm fascinated, not with the magical results, but with the complicated moves that the magician and his well-trained assistants have to go through to dazzle their audience into a spectacularly awe-struck suspension of disbelief

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 December 28, 2004 (Tuesday) • 4:00PM

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OKAY RA FAIRY KO
 THE LEGEND

STONY V. FAY

showing at ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD BRANCHES

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER **SATURDAYSpecial** SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2004 **Album showcases Diane Warren's instinctive musical touch**

By Noelani Torre

THERE are no muses in the 20-song CD that is "Diane Warren Presents: Love Songs." Each track here is a certified hit, from album opener "I Don't Want to Be Your Friend" (Nina) to the album's final song, "How Can We Be

Lovers?" (Michael Bolton). This collection has been heavily plugged on the radio for the past few months, and we can assure listeners that whatever it is the gushing advertisers has been saying about this CD is true.

Warren has been making hit songs for 20 years now, and she's



DION AND AEROSMITH. Their top hits were composed by Warren.

one of the few songwriters whose name is instantly recognizable to the general public.

If you're one of the few who doesn't know who she is, however, no doubt you'll be familiar with most of the songs in her repertoire.

Movies

A lot of her songs have been written for movies. In this collection, that would be Aerosmith's "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" (from "Armageddon"), Celine Dion's "Because You Loved Me" ("Up Close and Personal"), Christina Aguilera's "I Turn to You" ("Space Jam"), Trisha Yearwood's "How Do I Live" ("Con Air"), Faith Hill's "There You'll Be" ("Pearl Harbor"), Eric Clapton's "Blue Eyes Blue" ("Runaway Bride"), and LeAnn Rimes' "Can't Fight the Moonlight" ("Coyote Ugly").

Also included here is Shanice's "Saving Forever for You," the theme song to one of the '90s

biggest TV shows, "Beverly Hills 90210." —That's half of the playlist already!

Countless films have her songs in their soundtracks, and at the rate she's going, no doubt a hundred more will feature them, as well. Her "children" (as she refers to them) have earned her nominations: four Golden Globes, six Oscars and nine Grammys. She's also had her own star installed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and she's just been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

She's had numerous Top 100 songs, and her compositions have helped enhance and revive careers. "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" became Aerosmith's first No. 1 single, "Because You Loved Me" was Celine Dion's biggest hit, and "How Do I Live"—which had versions by Trisha Yearwood and LeAnn Rimes—hit No. 2 in Billboard for Yearwood, and went to No. 1 on the adult contemporary chart for Rimes.

Catchy melodies

"Love Songs" shows us the reasons for Warren's success—a gift for creating catchy melodies and lyrics, an emotionality infused with sincerity, and a well-honed instinct for the cinematic and the popular. "Where she goes, the public goes," is Hollywood producer Jerry Bruckheimer's description of Warren. He ought to know, being a trendsetter himself.

You can't go wrong with a collection like this—even the most hardcore non-pop lovers will find themselves singing along—or belting—if they don't watch themselves. That's what the Warren touch does.

Arts and culture channels needed on cable TV

By Nestor U. Torre

CABLE TV operators boast that their subscribers in the Philippines now number in the hundreds of thousands, so their channels now provide hefty competition to the "free" TV networks who have lorded it over the local television scene for the past 50 years.

Viewers pay hefty subscription fees for cable TV service because they're fed up with the limited choices, numerous commercials, "least common denominator" programming, and other irritants on free TV.

They also welcome the opportunity to watch programs from all over the world, not just the United States. This gives them a richer, deeper appreciation of life in the world, which the TV medium has transformed into a truly global village.

Specialized

Cable TV subscribers love getting extra servings of movies, news, sports, lifestyle features, documentary, talk and other topics, depending on the specialized channels their cable service carries.

For our part, we find ourselves tuning in most frequently to the Discovery, National Geographic, Etc., EWTN, Hallmark, Star World, Spanish, AXN, CNN, Star Movies, Animal Planet, HBO, Cinemax and NHK Channels.

While we appreciate the viewing bounties these cable channels provide, however, we feel deprived in the field of arts and culture. We know that there are cable channels that devote themselves exclusively to this significant field, so we urge our cable service suppliers to include them in their cable lineup.

In fact, we pledge here that, the minute we see a supplier include an arts and culture channel in its service's lineup, we will shift to that supplier. And we urge other arts and culture buffs to do the same.

When we're abroad, we view good cable TV programs on the arts, and our

ARTS/A23

Hatakin ang inyong loved ones ngayong pasko.

JOHN ESTRADA DANILO BARRIOS
 ELIZABETH DROPEZA JOEL TORRE MARK GIL BEARWIN MEILY
 TUESDAY VARGAS MIKEL CAMPOS
 AND CHERIE GIL AS LASTIKA

SARAH GERONIMO
 MARK BAUTISTA
 AS
MARS RAVELO'S
LASTIKMAN
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PERSEUS
 SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

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3. THE FORGOTTEN
4. SURVIVAL CHRISTMAS
5. AFTER THE SUNSET
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3. CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS
4. TARI
5. POLAR EXPRESS
6. ONE MISSED CALL

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2. AFTER THE SUNSET
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4. TARI
5. POLAR EXPRESS
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3. AFTER THE SUNSET
4. NATIONAL TREASURE
5. ONE MISSED CALL
6. CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS

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Adding salt to injury, babbling books and other boob-tube boobboos

By Nestor U. Torre

HERE'S a fresh batch of boob-tube boobboos, to make the season especially bright. Merry Christmas!

Hosts: What keeps you going despite the many problems you've had this year? What do you tell yourself to lift your spirits?

Guest: I tell myself, it's not end of the world. *Siguro*, this is but part of my life and trial.

(Wow, bigat!)

Host: What do you do when

temptation comes? After all, show biz is full of temptations!

Guest: Well, I admit, sometimes I fall. After all, we are just but human!

(We are just but human daw, o.)

BOOB TUBE**BooBoos**

Host: Why is this ingredient important in this dish that you are preparing?

Guest chef: Because this is the one that will keep the ano of this dish kwan.

(Thanks for being so—specific!)

Host: What do you say to people who object to the new procedure of your agency?

Guest: They should give it a chance to work, because it's in keeping with the obligatory, regulatory and predatory functions of our office.

(Predatory functions? How truthful can you get?)

Host: How are you now, after the troubles you had with your career and your marriage?

Guest: With the thanks of God, my life is now a stable!

(Do tell!)

Host: What is your reaction to the nasty things your husband's family has said against you after you broke up with him?

Guest: It's so painful, it's adding salt to injury!

(Adding salt to injury! Ouch,

that really hurts!)

Host: Did you expect to win the award?

Guest: That night, expected ko talaga—*puwedeng oo*, at *puwedeng hindi*.

(Make up your mind!)

Host: Weren't you too bitchy in your criticism of her performance?

Guest: It was not bitchy at all—it was very matter of factly.

(Ay, it was very matter of factly!)

Host: What message do you have for your many fans in the Philippines, after your show yesterday?

Guest: I know Filipino people love me, so I will prove them as a return.

(Ah, please repeat?)

Host: Can you describe what makes your resort special?

Guest: It's all the running water we have, the beautiful sight and sound it makes—from waterfalls, the water goes down to bubbling books!

(Ay, bubbling books!)

Host: What made you decide to cast (name of actor) in your new musical for children?

Guest: He was a natural choice. *Kilalang-kilala siya ng mga bata*, especially *ng mga kids!*

(Kuliti!)

Host: What do mature people need to keep in mind about the food they eat, if

they want to live a long and healthy life?

Guest: They should avoid food with a lot of high cholesterol.

(Ay, high cholesterol!)

Host: The people want to know, will anything happen to this latest case of hidden wealth?

Guest: Of course. We have the political will, so the case will be pursued jealously.

(One man's zealously is another man's jealousy...)

Host: What is a sign if there's something wrong with your heart?

Guest: You know something is wrong *kapag nagpa-palpitang ang puso!*

(Ay, nag-palpitang ang puso!)

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THE ADVENTURES OF VAUGHN AND ARIEL

10:00 PM

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10:30 PM

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SATURDAY Special

Susan Roces: The face still refreshes

By Boots Anson Roa

WHEN Jesusa "In-day" Levy Sonora, 15, was discovered by Sampaguita pictures in the mid-'50s, producer and star maker Dr. Jose "Pinggot" Perez, quickly dubbed his latest Bacolod find "the face that refreshes."

That was to be her image-building and promo "packaging," the USP or unique selling proposition for the studio's latest build-up star.

Rightly so, for Susan's beauty, then and now, not only has a refreshing appeal, it also evokes sweetness and light, almost permeated with the essence of delicate roses.

Chief competitor

Susan's chief competitor then for Movie Queenship—in the tradition of the Gloria Romero-Nida Blanca, Nora Aunor-Vilma Santos, and Sharon Cuneta-Maricel Soriano rivalries—was Amalia Fuentes.

Unlike Amalia, known to be the all-time most beautiful face in Philippine movies, Susan was no stunner and raving beauty with perfect facial features, hers was a soft and quiet allure that grew on you, enhanced by her cool while confident demeanor. She was and remains Poise personified.

Susan's earliest box-office hit for Sampaguita was "Boksingera," the story of a demure teenager who metamorphosed into a local boxing "champ" after hurdling rigorous training and overcoming



SUSAN (left) and Boots in 1974, with their respective daughters, Mary Grace and Chiqui.

rough challenges.

Shades of the widowed Susan Roces, who last week "packed a wallop," while maintaining grace, on her husband FPJ's political and media adversaries, both perceived and proven!

Shock value

Talk about shock value and counter-image moves! When asked how she could confront issues and even entities that Ronnie kept his distance from, Susan readily alluded to "Truth setting you free."

Up to the early '60s, when Susan decided to go "freelance," she remained one of Sampaguita's prized contract stars, scoring blockbusters through wholesome formula comedies, musicals and dramas where she was regularly

paired with heartthrob Eddie Gutierrez, alongside the Amalia Fuentes-Juancho Gutierrez love team.

Curiously, all of them ended up with different life partners: Eddie with Annabelle Rama; Amalia with Romeo Vasquez; Juancho with Gloria Romero, and Susan with her unlikely leading man, horse-riding and gun-toting action star, Fernando Poe Jr.

Susan was hardly associated with action flicks, so the pairing was considered a mismatch by many, especially since Susan had a non-show biz boyfriend at the time.

After FPJ entered the scene, fans of the "kilig" musical-comedy Susan-Eddie tandem were initially disappointed: They felt Susan was too fragile and demure to

fail for a rugged action star.

Looking back over the last two weeks, Susan showed that demureness and grace are not incompatible with strength amidst pain and pressure.

Weddings

Two Poe-Sonora weddings, civil on Dec. 16, and church on Dec. 25, 1968, were front page materials, with no less than then first couple, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, giving up their Christmas morning for the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills nuptials.

But, only after erroneous headlines that announced that Susan had eloped with then Sen. Soc Rodrigo's "son," Pempe Pempe, as is common knowledge now, is short for Josefina, Susan's best friend and confidante of long standing!

dante of long standing!

As media has reviewed the Ronnie-Susan marriage, it has turned out to be a lasting and stable partnership of 36 years. FPJ, in characteristic modesty, often pointed to Susan, who he had endearingly nicknamed "Swanie," as the marriage's most formidable component.

A marriage staple was Susan's constant deference to Ronnie for major domestic and career decisions, despite her being her very own person. At times, even menu selection—what seafood to match his favorite native salad—would be referred to Ronnie beforehand.

While presumably, she already knew or had her answers, her catch phrase was generally: "Let me check what Ronnie's orders

and preferences are." Clearly, it was her way of giving her husband importance and sovereignty in the Poe household.

Following her husband's earlier career move in the late '60s, Susan also launched her own film ventures via "Rosas" Productions, the domestic drama and comedy arm of FPJ Productions.

In 1974, I was complimented no end when Susan asked me to share with her the title of her company's "Dalawa ang Nagdaang-tao sa Akin."

Two friends

It was the story of two friends, one of whom sacrificed to enable the other to bear a child through a uterine implant. The film co-starred Ramil Rodriguez and Ronaldo Valdez and featured child wonder Dranreb, the then five-year-old son of Bernard Beldera and Divina Valencia.

As was affirmed by the movies (like "Angelita, Mga Mara ng Diyos" with Julie Vega) and TV shows we later did with Susan, professionalism was her passion, alongside her weakness for food.

Like Ronnie, Susan loves good food, but has a greater penchant for preparing *kalders* and *bandejados* to feed co-stars, staff and crew. And here, we talk of breakfast, lunch and dinner fare, plus *merienda* regularly thrown in!

On the set of Regal's present Metro Manila Filmfest entry, "Mano Po 3," where she is not even in the cast, she and Ronnie would send sandwiches, *siopao*, *siomai* and *pancit*, and at one time, even banana-leaf-packed *adobo* complete with *talong* and *ilog na maalat*. We, in the cast

SUSAN: A3-3

JOHN ESTRADA DANILO BARRIOS
CHERRIE GIL AS LASTIKA
SARAH GERONIMO
MARK BAUTISTA
 AS
MARS RAVELO'S
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Key's Message	Sarah Geronimo and Mark Bautista	Key's Message
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SATURDAYSpecial

Hollywood is coming to Bangkok



WEAVER. Topbills the dramatic feature, "Imaginary Heroes."

BANGKOK, Thailand—Cannes, Sundance, Toronto... and Bangkok? With its glitzy cast of directors and stars, next month's international film festival will bring Tinseltown to this Southeast Asian metropolis.

Jeremy Irons, Sigourney Weaver, Oliver Stone and Andrew Lloyd Webber are among a host of big names who will descend on Bangkok for its Eighth International Film Festival, Jan. 13-24, its organizers said recently.

4,000 films

About 180 films from nearly 50 countries—chosen from almost 4,000 films—will be screened during the 12-day event.

"I'm convinced this is a breakthrough year for Bangkok," Craig Prater, executive director of the festival, told reporters.

The festival will host seven world premieres and several regional firsts, including the Southeast Asian premiere of "The Phantom of the Opera," for which director Joel Schumacher and actor Gerard Butler, who plays the phantom, will be present.

Schumacher, who has directed more than 20 movies, including the 1980s classics, "St. Elmo's Fire" and "The Lost Boys," will receive a career achievement award due to be presented by actor Michael Douglas.

Irons will attend the screening of his film, "Being Julia," based on a novel by W. Somerset Maugham and set in 1930s London.

Weaver, star of the "Amen" movie trilogy, will be here to promote her new film, "Imaginary Heroes."

Presentation

Mexican cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto, who has worked on some 30 films including "Alexander," "21 Grams," "Frida" and "Amores Perros," will receive the Crystal Lens award, and Oliver Stone, who directed "Alexander," will be here to support the presentation of that award, Prater said.

The festival will kick off with a screening of Tom Hooper's "Red Dust," starring Academy Award-winner Hilary Swank as a prosecutor. The movie explores the effects of South



WEBBER. Film adaptation of his popular musical, "The Phantom of the Opera," will be screened in Thailand.

Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated atrocities and granted amnesty to those who fully confessed their crimes.

Artist David Hockney will be present for the screening of "David Hockney: The Colors of Music," a documentary about his production design work for operas.

AP

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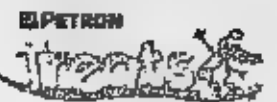


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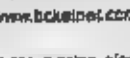
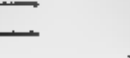
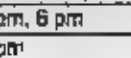
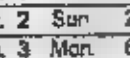
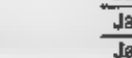
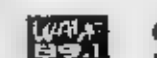
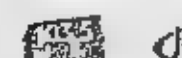
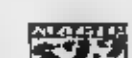
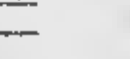
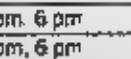
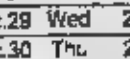
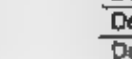
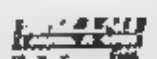
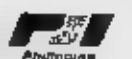
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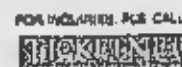
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ENSLE. Her self-hatred had simply crept upward.

Eve Ensler takes on the rest of the body

NEW YORK—Now that Eve Ensler's "Vagina Monologues" has traveled the globe, her stomach has a thing or two to add.

Ensler, the woman who transformed the vagina from a hushed "down there" into a marquee word that tumbles from the mouths of the highest-profile celebrities, has come to accept her private parts.

But, it was with some horror, she says, that she looked down at her "not-so-flat, post-40s stomach," and realized her self-hatred had simply crept upward.

Thus was born "The Good Body," Ensler's new play about her own navel-gazing, and the extreme efforts women make to shrink, starve, cover and fix their smallest imperfections. Her message? Learn to love your body, then get on with the bigger business of life.

Miracle

"I want women to be free," she says. "I want us to get up in the morning and go, 'Oh my God, I've got a body, what a miracle!'"

For her one-woman show on Broadway, Ensler interviewed hundreds of women on several continents, visited an American "fat camp," a Brazilian plastic surgery clinic, Weight Watchers meetings and gyms from Italy to India. Everywhere she went, she found women trying to fix themselves.

"There are few people who are not faced with this, particularly in this culture," she says. "Between the combination of Judeo-Christian religious 'be good, be good, be good' and capitalist 'something's wrong with you, buy this' and the parental upbringing, which is 'you're wrong, you're not thin enough, you're not smart enough... I mean, hello! We don't have a shot!'"

Sitting cross-legged in her dressing room at the Booth Theater and eating a tofu salad with chopsticks, Ensler's passion for her cause is clear. She waves her bangled arm for emphasis and frequently uses "hello!" as a verbal exclamation point.

Empowering women

That's because she sees her message as about more than just self-acceptance—it's about empowering women and changing the world.

"Our preoccupation and the distraction of fixing ourselves is keeping us away from focusing on the substantial issues at hand," she says. "When enough women come into their power and come into their voice, everything's going to shift."

From another mouth, that might sound preachy. But, Ensler wraps her message in a thick blanket of humor. She is bawdy, frank and frequently hilarious.

Ensler adopts many personas in "The Good Body." As an overweight teenager, she complains that plus sizes are kept in the back "like porn." As a Botox-injected forscomething, she cracks, "My face is numb, but I'm insane in here." As Cosmopolitan magazine editor

EVE/A3-5

'tis the season to make great things possible **Globe**

Willie Nepomuceno wants to be taken seriously

By Andy Bais

TO his followers, Willie Nepomuceno is a master comedian who shows them the funny albeit more human side of the popular and controversial figures he impersonates. Ironically, he does not really consider himself much of a comedian. "I am a serious man, and I'm serious even when I do my comedy," he declares.

Willie was thrust into show business by sheer force of circumstance. As a fine arts student at UP, he was an activist during the Marcos years. Before fiery speeches, he would entertain the crowd. "I'd perform protest jokes and songs before discussing issues. And, it was for free! I did it with passion," he recalls.

Popular figures

After imitating popular figures at the time, particularly the late President Marcos, he was hired as a broadcaster for ABS-CBN's Radyo Patrol, and was subsequently cast as part of the original

"Super Laff-In" gang

"May nakakuhang footage ng rallies that I performed in, at napanoood ako. E, walang bakante sa 'Radyo Patrol,' kaya pina-audition ako sa Super Laff-In," he recalls. Later, he got his own radio show before crossing over to television.

He refers to his act as "impressions" rather than "impersonation." "Impersonation is simply copying something and usually, there's nothing beyond that. For me, that's corny! I'd like to think that I go beyond that—like 'painting' an impression of a scene, situation or character. What you see is not necessarily the person's character per se, but an impression of the character na ginagaya ko," he explains.

On and off

Willie's career has been on and off because he never liked show business. "But, I have to be a part of it, kasi dito ko lang maa-express ang aking art," he confides.

Unknown to many, the gifted



NEPOMUCENO. "Impressions" rather than impersonation.

comic is also a theater actor and a fine singer. "When I was younger, gusto ko talagang maging actor or singer. Kaya lang, uso noon ang mesetso at matangkad—hindi ta-

laga ako papasa! So, I thought of a strategy: ginaya ko ang mga sikat, and I got stuck doing that. Hindi na ako makakanta using my own voice!

"Nabuhayan ako ng loob when I read the biography of Sammy Davis Jr. He wasn't recognized as a singer and actor until he performed on Broadway. In his concerts, impressions of popular actors and political figures were part of his act. I thought, ganun din ang mangyayari sa akin. Until now, nanggagaya pa rin ako," he sighs.

From doing vocal impressions, Willie expanded his acts by dressing up like the popular figures he impersonates. His impression of Marcos, particularly, created quite a stir. "In one of my shows, the First Family came unannounced. Nawala talaga ang pose ng dalawa—sa katalawan," he says.

Picture

Marcos even had his picture taken with Willie. "He kidded me na sigurang frustrated Marcos ako."

When Marcos died, Willie thought of other celebrities to mimic: he is equally unimpressive as former Presidents Estrada and

Ramos. But he never did a Cory Aquino or GMA impression.

"Bobae kasi sila unless I'm in full prosthetics, which would be very expensive. I draw the line: luluhod ba ako para mag-mukhang pandak? Ayokong pina-patawa ang tao for their physical liabilities. Green jokes are a no-no. Besides, I can't deliver them well. I can only go so far. Hindi ko teritoryo yun," he explains.

Central character

The late FPJ was a central character in his hit show, 'Willie Nep for President.' But, when FPJ lost in his presidential bid, Willie vowed not to do an impression on him again.

Is Willie expensive? he explains. "Akala lang nila yun. 'Di nila alam, mahal ko ang trabaho ko. There are people who see me as a novelty act. Pupwede ako sa piyesta at perya—mura lang yun! Sana, they think of the effort I put in, yung gastos sa costumes props and wigs. Nanubos ang kilay ko sa kaddikit ng fake brows!"

Susan Roces: The face still refreshes

From page A3-1

never ceased to wonder why, as we chomped with gusto on their "pobon" through niece Sheryl Cruz and Poe household institution, Aling Doray.

Punctuality

Susan's professionalism was marked by punctuality on the set. She would not only come on time, but would also arrive already completely made-up, with lines memorized and "ready for take."

Never "kulang sa panstin," Susan would always wait for her cues in some unobtrusive corner, preparing for the next scene, listening attentively to endless conversation from costars, meditating, or... eating!

She confesses to an ongoing

struggle with will power over sans rival and chocolate cake, only to lose the battle half the time.

Between Ronnie and Susan, the former gave his wife greater credit for business and administrative prowess. For the longest time, Susan ran the FPJ and Rosas Productions' management and booking front. Ronnie took to the creative and technical chores.

As a young star, Susan showed foresight by investing her earnings in real estate and business ventures. Susan bought a sizeable lot on Wilson St., Greenhills in the early sixties. She built a home for her family in what was to later emerge as a high-end subdivision traversing Mandauyong and San Juan.

As Wilson became busier, she

converted the house facade into a well patronized fruit and delicacy store. The site is presently occupied by a multistory building which the couple constructed and now leases as business offices.

Loyal friend

Like Ronnie, Susan is known to be a loyal friend, one who quietly reaches out to help. She always expresses interest in problems and how to solve them. Nevertheless, she hesitates to render unsolicited advice, even to closest friends.

When Susan visited Washington in 1993, our last year there, she made it a point to pay us a visit and even accompanied us to functions.

What I most appreciated was

the patience and courage with which she withstood my "hazardous" driving on several occasions. Then, I knew, she was a woman of steel!

My husband Pete, like Ronnie a stroke victim, has found a staunch supporter in her, to my chagrin: Everytime I complain to Susan that Pete still smokes two packs a day, she turns to me and says: pabayaan mo na sya, gyan na lang ang kalagayan niya.

The recent campaign showed the all-weather and strike-anywhere nature of Susan. The polengke tours said it all. Especially when she would lead us atop garbage disposal bins in the absence of platforms and do a Plaza Miranda.

Ever the wife and homeowner,

she would make even the most unlikely stops in busy streets if she saw items that she thought would catch Ronnie's fancy.

And, of course, food! The reminders of kakanin and fruits never had it so good in sales everytime Susan would scour the sidewalks.

In the campaign, Susan showed the same stamina, self-possession and fortitude that were recently reprised.

Sensitivity

Not to mention the intense sensitivity to both the nature and needs of people. She could spot a fake a mile away, but would listen civilly to what he had to say. Tell him off, she would, but always in a non-confrontational and forthright manner.

These are complemented and balanced by Susan's funny bone. Perhaps a mark of optimism as well is Susan's admirable skill at self-deprecation.

England's Prince Charles calls it the mark of true nobility—this ability to laugh at oneself.

In one of our more serious conversations about the country's future and her and Ronnie's, should he have won the elections, Susan adroitly diverted from hard issues and serious talk. When asked what her and Ronnie's greatest concerns were about living in Malacanang, her unabashed answer was: "Would I still be allowed to wear my old loose dusters, and can Ronnie still sleep in his Mickey Mouse and Tweety Bird undershirts?"

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TRIVIAL PURSUITS

Clive Owen reprises West End role on the big screen in 'Closer'

By Rito P. Asilo

DO you have questions about show biz you want answered, or fun facts and little-known trivia about your favorite celebrities you want to share with fellow show biz buffs? Get in touch with us at rasillo@inquirer.com.ph.

Onstage and onscreen

Who among the four leading actors in Mike Nichols' film adaptation of Patrick Marber's acclaimed play, "Closer," was in the original West End cast?

Clive Owen ("King Arthur") played Dan in the original London run of "Closer." To date, the film version directed by Mike Nichols has already won an award from the National Board of Review for the best performance by an ensemble (Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman and Owen).

The play, about the sexual politics between two couples, is so popular that it still runs at London's Radlett Center.

Name Game

Matt Damon has starred in seven films with titles that included his characters' names in them. What were these movies and his names in them?



ROBERTS AND OWEN. Their performances in Mike Nichols' film were cited by the National Board of Review.

"Good Will Hunting" (1997) as Will Hunting; "Saving Private Ryan" (1998) as Private Ryan; "The Talented Mr. Ripley" (1999) as Tom Ripley; "Gerry" (2002); "The Bourne Identity" (2002) and "The Bourne Supremacy" (2004) as Jason Bourne; and "Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron." In the upcoming "The Brothers Grimm," Damon will play Will Grimm.

CD breakthrough

What was the very first CD pressed in the US?

Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA."

Gorgeous vagrants

Which actors were recently barred from entering a hotel in Europe after they were mistaken as vagrants?

While discussing production logistics for Steven Soderbergh's "Ocean's 12" in Italy, George Clooney and Brad Pitt got caught in a rainstorm during a morning jog in Rome.

Not recognizing the two Hollywood heartthrobs, who are both former recipients of People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive award (with Pitt "winning" the title twice), the doorman thought that the soaked and soggy men were

vagrants, and barred them from entering the hotel, where they were billeted! The clueless hotel employee soon learned the error of his ways and hastily apologized to the amused—and very wet—actors.

Classy male

Who was the first male celebrity to appear on the cover of Vogue magazine?

Richard Gere. He was later followed by George Clooney.

A heartthrob's fears

What are Justin Timberlake's three greatest fears?

Justin is afraid of spiders and



GERE. First actor on the cover of Vogue.



PITT AND CLOONEY. Barred from hotel.

snakes, and of dying unloved. And he's scared that he'll fall unconscious at a concert if he gets hit by the stuffed animals that fans throw to him onstage. Ouch!

Reindeer names

What do "Donner" and "Blitzen" stand for? The reindeer's names stand for "thunder" and "lightning," respectively.

Muppets' nomenclature

How did "Sesame Street's" Bert and Ernie get their names? Bert and Ernie were named after characters from Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life": Officer Bert was a policeman, and Ernie Bishop was a taxi driver in the 1946 film classic.



TIMBERLAKE. Scared of spiders and snakes.

INQUIRER

INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2001

5:00 pm

SATURDAYS

6:00 pm

Real Stories
Loren

DRETSAHAN
with Jay Rapi

ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:00PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
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Scorsese's 'The Aviator' labor of love for DiCaprio

LONDON—Leonardo DiCaprio has never worked so hard on a movie, and doesn't mind admitting that an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of American billionaire Howard Hughes in "The Aviator" would be welcome.

In London to promote the Martin Scorsese-directed biopic, the 30-year-old described how he had read dozens of books and even spent time with a mentally ill man before taking on the role of Hughes, who was increasingly crippled by phobias.

Most extensive

"Certainly, it's the most extensive research I've ever done," DiCaprio said in an interview with Reuters.

"You do as much work and research as you can, and when portraying somebody that actually did live, you have to be really specific about what you want to convey."

"For an example, the neurosis. I spent a few days with a man who had an OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and learned his rituals, superstitions and the mind games that he had to play with himself 24 hours a day just to



DiCAPRIO. Read dozens of books for his role as Howard Hughes.

keep sane."

"The Aviator" covers Hughes' life from the 1920s to the 1940s, a turbulent time when he was everything from maverick filmmaker to daredevil aviator to a playboy who had affairs with Hollywood legends including

Katharine Hepburn and Ava Gardner.

It also alludes to his latter years living as an unkempt recluse terrified of germs. When he died in 1976, Hughes had become so unrecognizable that the medical examiner was forced to take his fingerprints to confirm the body was his.

DiCaprio met people who knew Hughes, an ex-wife, actresses who worked with him and also spoke to doctors about his mental condition.

"It was eight years in the making, 15 drafts of the script ultimately," he said. DiCaprio's performance is widely expected to win him an Oscar nomination at the least. Scorsese could also be in the running for his first Academy Award and the film itself is being tipped as a front runner.

Golden era

"The Aviator," which cost an estimated \$100 million and recreates Hollywood's golden era of the 1930s and 1940s, has already received six Golden Globe nominations, second only to "Sideways," a romantic comedy.

DiCaprio has never won an Oscar, but is one of the film industry's biggest names. He starred in "Titanic," the all-time top-earning film in most countries.

When asked about his Oscar chances, DiCaprio replied: "I'm just talking about a nomination. I'm just being honest in saying that anyone who says they wouldn't want to be nominated is full of you-know-what." But, the film's chances for the top honors were as important as his own, he added.

Great feeling

"Overall, that we've been recognized like that is a great feeling. How could it not be?"

Collaborating with Scorsese is becoming something of a habit for the heartthrob.

The two worked together on "Gangs of New York" and are due to start shooting "The Departed", based on a Hong Kong gangster flick.

"We both share a need to make things as authentic as we possibly can, and we're constantly fighting for that. Maybe, there's a partnership there for the two of us."

Reuters



CRUZ AND SARANDON. Co-star in the indie, "Noel."

Self-destructing DVDs to reach wider audience

LOS ANGELES—The Christmas-themed movie, "Noel," most likely won't be coming to a theater near you—but if you miss it on cable, there's always the self-destructing DVD.

The movie's producers hope that its "unimultaneous" roll out this month, which started last weekend with a theater release in five major cities in the United States, will prove that the public is willing to "rent" movies that must be tossed in the trash after a viewing or two.

Disposable DVDs look and play like normal DVDs, except that their playable surface is dark red.

Chemical time-bomb

Each disc contains a chemical time-bomb that begins ticking once it's exposed to air. Typically, after 48 hours, the disc turns darker, becoming so opaque that a DVD player's laser can no longer read it. (Discs can live as little as one hour or as long as 60 hours.)

The format has been around for a few years, but it hasn't generated much interest from movie studios, video rental companies—or customers—despite experiments to deliver movies direct to consumers and eliminate late fees.

Enter "Noel," an emotional Christmas story starring Susan Sarandon, Penelope Cruz and Robin Williams. The independent film was shown at this year's Toronto Film Festival, but didn't attract interest from mainstream distribution companies.

So, the Atlanta-based Convex Group bought distribution rights and is releasing the film on a few dozen screens.

Then, the movie will be available in the disposable EZ-D format for \$4.99 (euro3.85) on Amazon.com. On cable, it will air once, on TNT, during Thanksgiving weekend.

Exclusive rights

Convex owns more than 100 media patents and holds exclusive distribution rights to CD-ROMS that fit into the lids of soft drink cups.

The technology's backers see it as an alternative for video rental stores and Netflix-type mail-based subscription services.

After the movie is watched, the consumer tosses it into the trash, eliminating late fees and the cost of return mail—but creating a potentially large, new source of trash.

The potential to add to landfills may be the least of reasons

SELF-DESTRUCTING/A3-7

Eve Ensler takes on the rest of the body

From page A3-5

Helen Gurley Brown, she brags, "I'm down to 90 pounds. Another 10 years, I'll be down to nothing."

"There's a strong political and social theme running through this play, but what's nice about it is, it's also very funny," says director Peter Askin.

Ensler credits Askin with helping her transform her performance. For "The Vagina Monologues," she simply read from a stool. In "The Good Body," she does dozens of sit-

ups, dashes across the stage and even throws in some dance numbers.

Musical

"We initially thought, 'Well, maybe I'll get off the stool,'" she says. "I feel like it's a musical now."

Ensler, 51, smiles often and laughs easily. As an activist for nearly 30 years, she has discovered that hitting people over the head with a message usually

turns them off. "Humor often works. It seems to get people in a different way."

Her cause remains a serious one: Ending violence against women. Ensler was raped and abused by her father as a child and spent years struggling with drug addiction and self-destruction.

Early years

"Most of my early years were about just trying to not do my-

self in," she says. "So, I used to have this deal that if I get through this, I'll help other people."

Writing helped her turn a corner in her life, and eventually started a global phenomenon. "The Vagina Monologues," which started off-Broadway a decade ago, has been translated into 35 languages and been performed by such stars as Glenn Close, Oprah Winfrey and Winona Ryder.

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Pops Fernandez, Jed Madela opt for revivals

By Rito P. Asilo

DESPITE the setback brought about by the problem of piracy, the local recording industry continues to churn out new releases from top and promising recording artists.

But, in the last five years, we have noticed changes in trends and tastes that are curiously geared toward independent, alternative sound and, for most pop-oriented singers, cover versions of standards and contemporary ballads.

Jed Madela may be not be a very familiar face, although we believe he should be. His second album, "Songs Rediscovered," is a hefty, 17-track showcase of this vocal dynamo and an awesome demonstration of the young singer's technique.

Familiar song

Yes, it can get tiring to listen to the album's very familiar songs after some spins in your CD player. For example, a number of local recording artists have their own versions of Keith Martin's tedious but radio-friendly "Because of You," Mark Sherman's soaring but unapologetically sappy "Changes in My Life," the overused "More Than You'll Ever Know," or Survivor's vocally demanding "The Search Is Over."

But, it's a testament to any singer's ability to give an old, schmaltzy ballad a different emotional twist through sheer vocal technique—and Jed has a lot of this to share!



FERNANDEZ. Has become comfortable with the limitations of her voice.

But, power isn't just volume, and the singer knows his way around his musical notes. He doesn't just shout to amaze, although he can easily do so if he wishes.

In his show-stopping version of "Home" (from the musical, "The

Wiz"), he proves that the lower register of his voice is just as stable as his belting ability.

In "Time Will Reveal," his enviable falsetto is strong and seamless. In "Only Reminds Me of You" and "Right Next to Me," his vocal shifts are smooth and exquisite.

Among the songs, Pin Lipso Lipso's "Beauty and Madness" and Ray Parker Jr.'s "The Past" stand out because, while these tunes don't require as much bravura singing as say Rick Price's "Heaven Knows," these are the perfect tunes to showcase the performer's mid-range vocal stability.

Other tracks included in the album are Elton John's "Your Song," The Williams Brothers' "Can't Cry Hard Enough," Kenny Lerum's "For You," and Cynthia Weil's "Love Always Finds A Way."

Identity

Unfortunately, despite the quantity of the tracks in the collection, singing covers doesn't really help Jed create his unique, musical identity, since his repertoire is limited to songs that have been popularized by other singers.

Singing remakes is fine, but how do you create your style and strengthen your image if you are limited to singing rehearsed tunes?

Performing original songs is how singers earn their stripes—because that's how you create identity, and not just copy or improve on a version that's already been covered ad nauseum.

Take Pops Fernandez, for example. Her 10-track album, "When Words Are Not Enough," contains mostly remakes of popular songs like Lauren Wood's "Fallen" (from "Pretty Woman"), although Pops manages to tweak the obvious sentimentality of the



MADELA. Power isn't just volume.

song, and make the ditty a sweet, gushing ode to falling in love.

We are no big Pops Fernandez fans, but her latest CD is her best album in years. And this is simply because she has become comfortable with the limitations of her voice—which consequently becomes the album's asset.

The occasional off-key moments are still there, especially noticeable in the Filipino songs ("Hahanapin Mo Ba Ako?", "Higit sa Lahat, Mahal Mo Ba Ako?"), but these "sins" have been mostly dealt with in the album, and are thus forgivable.

Pops smartly sings songs that fall within her range, so the singing sounds comfortable and unforced.

It's when she pushes her range that she gets into trouble (as she does in "Misty").

The arrangements are light, innovative and well-produced ("Light of My Life," "Crying Over You").

Carrier track

Our personal pick is the carrier track, Rex Smith's "You Take My Breath Away," whose arrangement perfectly captures Pops' alto, and she delivers it with "informed" panache.

It's not everyday that we surprise ourselves by buying albums that pleasantly go beyond our expectations, so we're glad that Fernandez's latest compilation does just that.

Surviving the fiscal crisis in the recording industry

By Remy Umerez

ACCORDING to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), there has been a minimal decline worldwide in the state of music and recording. Consequently, the local industry has also suffered the same fate, but the overall scenario is not as gloomy as the dismal local film industry.

Biggest problem

PARI president Antonio Ocampo points out to piracy as the biggest problem the music industry has to handle:



MONTERO. Debut album.

It is a Herculean task, solving a problem that is almost impossible to eradicate. But the creation of the Optical Media Board (formerly Videogram

Regulatory Board) is a big help in our campaign against piracy," he observes.

Ocampo is also the president of Ivory Music Video. He reveals that the market is predominantly



OCAMPO. Solving piracy is a Herculean task.

made up of students who prefer to spend their allowance on cell phone loads than on cassettes and CDs.

Despite the trying times, Ivory has survived the crisis. The com-

pany has earned the trust and support of the record-buying public, and is now ready to diversify.

He observes that the company's performance in 2004 is better than last year. As Ivory invades the video market, it is modifying its name. Some 50 movie titles produced by OctoArts are exclusively released by Ivory, among them the blockbuster movies, "Fantastikman" and "Malikmata."

Brisk sales

Brisk sales depend on how good and efficient the distribution network is. BMG products are being distributed by Ivory in key cities in the Visayas and Mindanao. Other labels they handle are Praise (gospel songs), the British jazz label

Cand.d, and Tao, the outfit that produces the albums of Grace Nono.

Albums

Ivory also distributes the albums of concert pianist Raul Sunico, Jeni Hernandez, Eight of March, Jay and Bev, and Maricar de Mesa.

The outfit enjoyed a robust year with a number of albums reaching the gold and platinum marks. MYMP (Make Your Momma Proud) has reached platinum (30,000 units sold); "Star in A Million" champ Erik Santos is gold-bound with his latest album, "Iniwan."

And Ocampo is optimistic about the release of Troy Montero's debut album, "Special Memory," which contains 12 tracks.

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Young Christmas Stars bring hope and cheer

By Nestor U. Torre

OUR Christmas Stars this week are youthful entertainers who are outstanding in their own right, despite their relatively tender years. Thus, they provide a different kind of inspiration in terms of a hopeful future for the local entertainment industry, which has had more than its usual annual quota of woes this year.

Let's start off with Billy Crawford, the Pil-Ann singer who's now a star in Europe. Billy has topped popularity dials over some rather big names in the field of popular music, but the good news is, he hasn't allowed his success to go to his head.

Unassuming ways

On home leave in Manila recently, Billy impressed his local fans with his unassuming ways. But, when he performed, they saw how professional he had become, and why he's made it so big in Europe.

In the movies, Billy was able to clinch a starring role in the much-awaited sequel to "The Exorcist," but his version was deemed not bloody enough by its producers, so it's been released only on video.

For most other young comers, this disappointing turn of events would have been cause for them to grievously doubt their talent, but Billy is made of sterner stuff. Instead of letting the sad denouement derail his career, he's simply charged it to experience, and moved on.



CRAWFORD. Success hasn't gone to his head.

With his determination and never-say-die attitude, Billy Crawford's star is sure to rise to greater heights in entertainment seasons to come.

Bigger and better things

Our second youthful Christmas Star is Rayver Cruz. He's still in his mid-teens, but the new star of the "Spirits" TV series is clearly made for bigger and better things in entertainment.

We first noticed him when we saw him dancing months ago on TV. There were other male starlets doing the same steps with him, but Rayver stood out because he simply danced better and more enthusiastically than his peers.

Even more impressively, he didn't just do the choreographed steps correctly, he made them his own with his sense of enjoyment and interpretive skills. Those are some of the hallmarks of stardom, so Rayver has "it."

Now that Chito Roño has tapped him to play the leader of the young



TRILLO. Astute characterization in "Aishite Masu."

team of superheroes in "Spirits," Rayver is truly coming into his own. He should be impressing even more people next year.

Another young performer who's standing out in show biz's maddening crowd of eager-beaver aspirants is Dennis Trillo. His big break is in the MMFF film, "Aishite Masu," where he plays a beautiful, cross-dressing gay.

Gay character

Now, portraying a gay character isn't the usual route to stardom for a male comer, but Dennis' characterization is so astute that what comes through is his thespian talent, not his skill at swishing.

So, the unusual role should enable Dennis to reap even more unusually profitable dividends as an actor, and won't typecast him in transvestite parts. Wonderful prospects all around, especially for the obviously talented and perceptive Dennis Trillo. (To be concluded)

Side A anthology is hefty and comprehensive

By Noelani Torre

WE literally grew up with Side A. They were singing "Hold On" when we were in grade school, "Forevermore" in high school, and "Will I Ever" in college. They were the live band 10 years before the acoustic craze even began, and they remain the yardstick against which other bands are measured.

It's not surprising then that they didn't have a problem coming up with "signature" tunes to include in their most recent release, "Side A Anthology." The two-disc collection is packed with 38 of them, including covers and duets with Sharon Cuneta ("All This Time") and Zsa Zsa Padilla ("Think It Over").

Earliest hit

"Anthology" traces the band's development from its earliest hit, "Eva Maria," to "So Many Questions," "Forevermore," and their covers of other well-loved songs (like Joey Albert's "Tell Me").



POPULAR quintet's double disc compilation traces the band's development.

Formed in 1985, Side A has had an unending string of hits for almost two decades now, and "An-

thology" is their 12th album. According to the band's PR, it "achieved Gold-record status dur-

ing the first few days of its release." The band and its producers are anxious to counteract the

negative effect that piracy has been having on sales.

The price-lowering of their anthology has also resulted in a bare bones inlay, no CD art whatsoever—and as for songs' lyrics for the diehards who just have to sing along, forget about it.

38 songs

Still, the music remains great despite the absence of the usual CD fills we've come to expect—and 38 songs is a lot of music!

The tracks are culled from the group's 1989's self-titled debut (Ivory), 1991's "White Album" (Vicar), 1993's "Blue Album" (Vicar), 1994's "By Your Side" (Warner), 1995's "Forevermore," 1996's "Side A Live! The 10th Anniversary Concert," 1997's "Side A Yr. 12," 1998's "Ang Atin Awitin," 2000's "Will I Ever," 2001's "The Platinum Collection," and 2002's "Side A Acoustic Love Songs Collection." Eighteen songs produced during the first half of their career are in the first

disc, and 20 from the second half are in the second CD.

Instruments

If you've noticed, however, the band hasn't produced an album that wasn't a collection for almost five years now. Not that that's a bad thing per se, but bands usually start coming out with strings of "greatest hits," "acoustic versions" or "anthologies" when they're going through a creative dry spot or are thinking of hanging up their instruments.

We certainly hope that's not the case here. Side A has been with us for what seems like forever, and it would be a shame to see them out of the scene.

Still, it would be nice to hear some new stuff—maturity's bound to have effected changes in their music.

Meanwhile, fans can console themselves with this juicy compilation of songs that have made Side A what they are today.

International Month celebrations

(Conclusion)

ON the first day of December, the Esteban International School Choir sang Christmas carols at the lobby of the Dusit Hotel to the delight of the audience composed of parents and relatives.

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Self-destructing DVDs to reach wider audience

From page A3-5

disposable DVDs have so far been a dud.

The discs can be illegally copied and pirated, just like regular DVDs. And, while they are made of recyclable plastic, consumers would have to mail them to a special center for processing.

Subscription

Blockbuster Inc. hasn't embraced disposable DVDs because it says it does not want to confuse its customers. Instead, the company has adopted a Netflix-like subscription approach to video rentals.

"We don't see the idea going anywhere, ultimately," Blockbuster spokesman Randy Hargrave said of disposable DVDs.

That's bad news for Convex, which bought Flexplay last month. Flexplay had provided discs to The Walt Disney Co., which has experimented with the format for the past year in eight test markets.

Disney has released a number of films on the discs, including "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" and "Bridget Jones's Diary."

Convenience stores

The movies are sold in unconventional outlets, such as convenience stores, and are generally made available weeks after they first appear on DVD.

For films with less backing, disposable DVDs may be an option. "Noel" director Chazz Palminteri hopes Convex's

unique marketing approach will generate a buzz, calling it "the only way you can compete with the Christmas movies that have \$30 million budgets."

While the novelty of a fading DVD may attract some buyers, Convex chief executive Jeff Arnold said it won't take off without studios releasing films in the format. "People aren't enamored of technology. They are enamored of content," he said.

Opposition

But, Convex ran into a wall of opposition from major theater chains, none of which wanted to show a movie that would appear on television and be sold on DVD at the same time.

The average studio release is in

theaters for five months before it is released on DVD, according to the National Association of Theater Owners.

So, Convex started showing "Noel" at smaller theaters in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Atlanta and Chicago.

Alternative routes

Studios haven't given up trying alternative routes to get DVDs into the hands of consumers more quickly.

Some studios release DVDs, even of hit blockbuster films, after less than four months in theaters. Five studios operate an Internet-based service called "MovieLink," which lets consumers download films, usually after they have appeared in video rental stores. AP



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Side A anthology is hefty and comprehensive

By Noelani Torre

WE literally grew up with Side A. They were singing "Hold On" when we were in grade school, "Forevermore" in high school, and "Will I Ever" in college. They were the live band 10 years before the acoustic craze even began, and they remain the yardstick against which other bands are measured.

It's not surprising then that they didn't have a problem coming up with "signature" tunes to include in their most recent release, "Side A Anthology." The two-disc collection is packed with 38 of them, including covers and duets with Sharon Cuneta ("All This Time") and Zsa Zsa Padilla ("Think It Over").

Earliest hit

"Anthology" traces the band's development from its earliest hit, "Eva Marie," to "So Many Questions," "Forevermore," and their covers of other well-loved songs (like Joey Albert's "Tell Me").



POPULAR quintet's double disc compilation traces the band's development.

Formed in 1985, Side A has had an unending string of hits for almost two decades now, and "An-

thology" is their 12th album. According to the band's PR, it "achieved Gold-record status dur-

ing the first few days of its release." The band and its producers are anxious to counteract the

negative effect that piracy has been having on sales.

The price-lowering of their anthology has also resulted in a bare bones inlay, no CD art whatsoever—and as for songs' lyrics for the diehards who just have to sing along, forget about it.

38 songs

Still, the music remains great despite the absence of the usual CD frills we've come to expect—and 38 songs is a lot of music!

The tracks are culled from the group's 1989's self-titled debut (Ivory), 1991's "White Album" (Vicom), 1993's "Blue Album" (Vicom), 1994's "By Your Side" (Warner), 1995's "Forevermore," 1996's "Side A Live! The 10th Anniversary Concert," 1997's "Side A Pt. 12," 1998's "Ang Ating Awitin," 2000's "Will I Ever," 2001's "The Platinum Collection," and 2002's "Side A Acoustic Love Songs Collection." Eighteen songs produced during the first half of their career are in the first

disc, and 20 from the second half are in the second CD.

Instruments

If you've noticed, however, the band hasn't produced an album that wasn't a collection for almost five years now. Not that that's a bad thing per se, but bands usually start coming out with strings of "greatest hits," "acoustic versions" or "anthologies" when they're going through a creative dry spot or are thinking of hanging up their instruments.

We certainly hope that's not the case here. Side A has been with us for what seems like forever, and it would be a shame to see them out of the scene.

Still, it would be nice to hear some new stuff—maturity's bound to have effected changes in their music.

Meanwhile, fans can console themselves with this juicy compilation of songs that have made Side A what they are today.

International Month celebrations

(Conclusion)

ON the first day of December, the Esteban International School Choir sang Christmas carols at the lobby of the Dusit Hotel to the delight of the audience composed of parents and relatives.

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Self-destructing DVDs to reach wider audience

From page A3-5

disposable DVDs have so far been a dud.

The discs can be illegally copied and pirated, just like regular DVDs. And, while they are made of recyclable plastic, consumers would have to mail them to a special center for processing.

Subscription

Blockbuster Inc. hasn't embraced disposable DVDs because it says it does not want to confuse its customers. Instead, the company has adopted a Netflix-like subscription approach to video rentals.

"We don't see the idea going anywhere, ultimately," Blockbuster spokesman Randy Hargrove said of disposable DVDs.

That's bad news for Convex, which bought Flexplay last month. Flexplay had provided discs to The Walt Disney Co., which has experimented with the format for the past year in eight test markets.

Disney has released a number of films on the discs, including "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" and "Bridget Jones' Diary."

Convenience stores

The movies are sold in unconventional outlets, such as convenience stores, and are generally made available weeks after they first appear on DVD.

For films with less backing, disposable DVDs may be an option. "Noel" director Chazz Palminteri hopes Convex's

unique marketing approach will generate a buzz, calling it "the only way you can compete with the Christmas movies that have \$30 million budgets."

While the novelty of a fading DVD may attract some buyers, Convex chief executive Jeff Arnold said it won't take off without studios releasing films in the format. "People aren't enamored of technology. They are enamored of content," he said.

Opposition

But, Convex ran into a wall of opposition from major theater chains, none of which wanted to show a movie that would appear on television and be sold on DVD at the same time.

The average studio release is in

theaters for five months before it is released on DVD, according to the National Association of Theater Owners.

So, Convex started showing "Noel" at smaller theaters in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Atlanta and Chicago.

Alternative routes

Studios haven't given up trying alternative routes to get DVDs into the hands of consumers more quickly.

Some studios release DVDs, even of hit blockbuster films, after less than four months in theaters. Five studios operate an Internet-based service called "Movielink," which lets consumers download films, usually after they have appeared in video rental stores. AP



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GARLAND. First sang "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas."

FROM Grace Guingab of Isabela: "I love listening to Christmas carols, but my favorites are 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas' and 'White Christmas.' Who sang their original versions?"

Grace, your favorite Christmas carol, composed by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane ("The Trolley Song"), was first sung by Judy Garland ("The Wizard of Oz") in the 1944 Vincent Minnelli classic, "Meet Me in St. Louis."

When Garland turned 21, she refused to make movies that featured her as a teenager. She would send her mother to MGM studios to refuse on her behalf, but upon the persistence of then new director Minnelli, Garland agreed to do the film and, in the process, fell in love with the director, whom she married soon after the movie was shown. The couple's only child is Oscar and Tony winner Liza Minnelli ("Cabaret").

Musical

"White Christmas" was taken from the 1954 movie musical of the same title, which starred Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney. (Its composer, Irving Berlin, was responsible for one of the very first songs sung in motion pictures—a ballad called "Blue Skies.")

Berlin wrote the music and lyrics with the help of a transcriber—because he couldn't write musical notations, a unique situation for a legendary songwriter with 1,500 songs to his name!

On the other hand, it's interesting to note that "Jingle Bells," a song that is practically synonymous with Christmas, was not really written as a Christmas carol.

James Pierpont, a church minister, wrote the song (originally called "The One Horse Open Sleigh") in 1857 for a Thanksgiving program—not Christmas!—for the Boston church where he taught Sunday school. Pierpont made the rhythm so jaunty and the words so catchy that his 40 little Sunday schoolers learned it almost instantaneously.

First performance

Admiring the song, a friend of Pierpont called it a "merry little jingle," and gave the tune the title by which we know it today. The children's first performance was such a success that they were asked to repeat it at Christmastime, whereupon the sleigh took on the identity of Santa's sled, and "Jingle Bells" became a timeless Yuletide dirty.

"Silver Bells" was from the 1951 Bob Hope starrer, "The Lemon Drop Kid," a gangster movie set during the holidays. The song became so popular that they released two separate singles in the same season: The movie version was sung by Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell, and the pop version by Bing Crosby and Carol Richard. (Unfortunately, the movie was deemed so bad it was banned in Finland.)

'Shrek 3' release delayed

LOS ANGELES—Dreamworks Studios said recently it had delayed the release of its highly anticipated animated movie, "Shrek 3," by six months as Hollywood frantically reshuffles its cartoon debuts.

Dreamworks said that the third installment of the adventures of the giant green ogre, "Shrek," would be pushed back until May 2007 from late 2006.

The move came a day after Oscar-winning rivals Pixar Animation Studios and Walt Disney announced they would delay the debut of their last collaboration, "Cars," until June 2006 from November 2005.

Dreamworks chief executive Jeffrey Katzenberg said the change in "Shrek's" next planned sortie had been prompted by Disney-Pixar's announcement.

Better returns

"The sheer magnitude of the Shrek franchise has led us to conclude that a May release date, with a DVD release around the holiday season, will enable us to best maximize performance and increase profitability, thereby generating enhanced asset value and better returns for our shareholders," DreamWorks Animation chief Jeffrey Katzenberg said in a statement.

Both Dreamworks and Disney-Pixar hope their new early summer debuts will allow them to cash in on both the large summer audience and the holiday DVD market that follows.

The first two "Shrek" movies were released in early May of 2001 and 2004 respectively and went on to a combined domestic gross of more than \$708 million. **AFP**

SATURDAY Special

Stories behind classic Christmas carols

In 1950, almost 40 years after its release, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) gave the holiday tune an award for being the "most performed feature-film standard song."

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!" were the only Christmas songs used in Frank Capra's ultimate holiday movie, "It's A Wonderful Life" (1946). Ironically, however, before the film classic became annual holiday TV fare, it was among James Stewart's lowest-grossing

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

movies.

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town" was written (with lyricist Haven Gillespie) for composer John Fredrick Coots' rowdy, little nephews. In 1914, Coots was a Wall Street banker who shifted careers after seeing a professional music "plugger" selling new songs in a music shop. (The duo's second collaboration, "You Go to My Head," is a torch song classic more recently associated with Linda Ronstadt.)

Merry Christmas, everyone!



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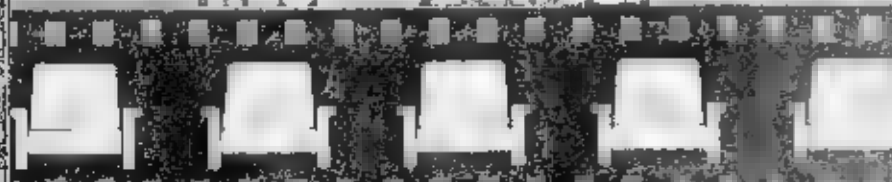
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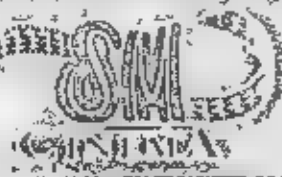
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A20



INNER CIRCLE. Biggest act in its niche.

Party reggae collection with a touch of soul

By Noelani Torre

IN 1968, brothers Ian and Roger Lewis founded reggae group Inner Circle along with Steven "Cat" Coore, Michael "Ibo" Cooper, and Richard Daley.

Changes

Now, 36 years later, they've gone through several member changes and dry spots, but have also bagged a Grammy, mounted numerous world tours, and spawned a number of international hits—enough to allow them to release a "best of" collection. If their name doesn't ring a bell,

maybe some of their hits will—particularly "Bad Boys," well known for being the theme song of Fox's "Cops," and the inspiration for the titles of two Will Smith and Martin Lawrence starrers—"Bad Boys" and "Bad Boys 2," and "Sweat (A La La La Long)," a naughty, highly groovesome tune that first shocked our sensibilities a few years back.

"Danceable" is an adjective that could describe a great deal of the music of Inner Circle. A fusion of pop, rock, and reggae, it has proven to be a worldwide favorite, as can be attested to by the success of their world tours.

Out of the group's original lineup, only the Lewis brothers (Ian on bass

and Roger on guitar) have remained.

The other members of today's quintet are Toussier Harvey on keyboards, Lancelot Hall on drums, and vocalist Kris Beniley. Beniley is a relative newcomer, having replaced Carlton Coffie in 1997 (when the latter decided to pursue a solo career). Coffie had, in turn, replaced Inner Circle's charismatic former vocalist, Jacob Miller, who died in a car crash in 1980.

Solo artist

Miller had already been enjoying success as a solo artist before he joined the group. His Rastafarian spirituality greatly influenced the band's sound, resulting in songs with

more social conscience in them. He authored such socially progressive hits as "Forward Jah Jah Children," "Tired Fe Lick Weed in a Bush," "All Night Till Daylight," and "Tenement Yard."

His death greatly affected the others, resulting in Inner Circle's disbanding and Harvey and Ian Lewis' moving to Miami.

The move eventually proved to be fruitful, however, especially when Roger appeared on the scene, and the trio decided to revive the band with Coffie and Hall as replacements.

Exposure

The loss of Miller's influence and the band's exposure to mid-80s dance music caused another change in the Inner Circle sound. The pop influence became more apparent, and traces of R&B were also detectable.

This is the musical strain featured in the hits collection, "The Best of Inner Circle (Sweat A La La La Long)," released earlier this year.

Playlist

Included in the 20-track playlist are two versions of "Sweat," other hits like "Bad Boys" and "Bad to the Bone," and covers like "Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da" and "Book of Rites." There are no Miller-penned numbers here, a testament to the fact that the group has long been over that particular phase.

The songs here are classic party reggae with a touch of soul. Inner Circle is, in fact, the biggest act in this particular crossover niche. And a listen to the laid-back yet thumping tracks in this collection will tell you why.

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Gateway Cineplex 10

Welcomes the 30th Metro Manila Film Festival entries for 2004

Movie going like no other

In full support of the country's cinema industry, Gateway Cineplex 10, the most advanced Cineplex center in the country today, proudly showcases all the Festival entries in theaters that are like no other. There is no better place to watch the best Filipino movies than the country's latest and most advanced Cineplex.

Cinematic Marvel

The lobby alone is a main feature in itself. A glorious dome filters in gentle light all the way down to the Rustan's Fresh! activity area. A 110-foot wraparound mural by famed director Fritz Ynfante adds glorious color graphics. All movie schedules, seating availability and even trailers are displayed on plasma TV screens. The Vista ticketing system adds greater convenience by allowing seat collection and ticket issuing at the Gateway Concierge by the entrance of the mall.

Cinematic High Fashion

The world renown Cineplex designer and film exhibition expert Ian Riches, created Gateway's theaters to be the most advanced in the country today. All theaters feature stadium seating, allowing for more legroom and an unobstructed view of the screen.

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Our Dolby Digital EX surround sound systems in all 10 cinemas make you almost see the sound. All ten theaters have the Boral

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Cinematic Decadence.

For incurable cinema romantics, ultra luxurious Gateway's Perfect 10 cinema will set the standard for luxury. Forty La-Z-Boy

seats recline back to near horizontal! Private screenings can be booked with a choice of entrees and snacks, bottomless iced tea and popcorn as well as a selection of wines, beers and juices. All these are served so you never have to leave your seat.



Meet & greet your favorite stars of the MMFF at the new Cineplex lobby! Check ads & posters for details.

Gateway

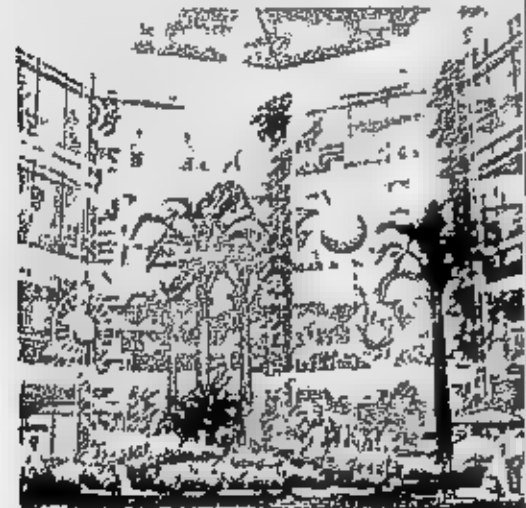
Shopping like no other

More new outlets are opening up to serve holiday shoppers. Access via both the MRT2 and LRT3, which no other mall has, offers a car-less holiday shopping option. Rustan's Department Store, Rustan's Fresh, Taco Bell, Fornarina, Lacoste Accessories, Lacoste Apparel, Mossimo, Cumbia, Mod Milano, Spin, Havin' a Baby, Orange Juice, PabDer Uomo, Hush Puppies, Pizza Hut Bistro, Tutto Moda, Bass, Marks & Spencer, Guess, Jessica/Colour 18/ Episode, Speedo, Adidas, Olympic Village, Enzo Angiolini, Beauty Bar, Arrow, Van Heusen, Osh Kosh B'Gosh, LA Gear, U2, Bayo, Luscious, Sweet Factory, Max's Restaurant, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Picture City, BPI Express, Watson's, Odyssey, St. Paul's, Vision Express, Travel Club, I-Pose, Smart Wireless Center, Photoline, Mercury Drug.



Fornarina. Italy's hottest fashion destination.

From Via Condotti to London, Melrose Avenue, Frankfurt, Tokyo and now to Manila, Fornarina, Italy's fashion sizzler, comes to Gateway. Fornarina offers a fashionable edgy attitude for the young and feeling young.

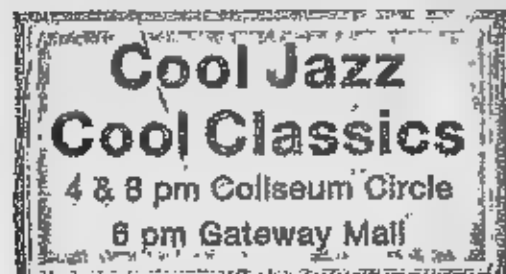


The Oasis. A floating garden opens to thrill.

Right in the middle of Gateway Mall, a resplendent garden "floating" above the street level provides a thrilling respite to shoppers. Towering royal palms shooting out to the open sky is a sight like no other for malls today.

Parking for 5,000 cars.

Gateway Mall alone has 700 covered parking spaces. ShopWise has 400 slots, Ali Mall and all other open areas give shoppers reassurance of ample parking.



A CINEMATIC MARVEL



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THE IDD RATE YOU CAN USE AND ABUSE

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Have a merrier Christmas with what you save from your Sun IDD!

Economically, it's been a tough year, but we Filipinos never let hard times stop ourselves from enjoying Christmas. It simply means we need to be more creative and look for better value whenever we can. So, when it comes to IDD rates, it's best to compare. You'll be pleasantly surprised to find that Sun Cellular's IDD rate is only 30¢ per minute to over 200 countries. That's a big 25% savings compared to other networks' IDD rates.

It's the IDD rate you can use and abuse - it allows you to spend real quality talk time with your family and friends abroad. Tell your best friend all the highlights of the Season or even the year past. Let your kids reel off their long Christmas lists to Tita or even allow your Kuya to eavesdrop on the Noche Buena banter. It's really up to you!

Best of all, Sun's 30¢ per minute IDD rate not only means that you can take your time wishing your loved ones a merry Christmas but also have enough money left to spare. Whenever you make an average-length call using Sun Cellular to your relatives and friends abroad, the P22 you save can readily be used to buy extra Christmas cards, ornaments and stocking treats. Or how about giving that money to charity? Your P22 can buy a toy in Divisoria to help bring cheer to an orphan or a notebook needed by an indigent student.

Then, there is always the extra pleasure of using the money left over after making all those IDD calls to buy the most special person in your life an unexpected Christmas present. So go out and get something nice - probably the latest mobile handset powered by Sun Cellular!

So save more with the IDD service you can use and abuse. It's Sun Cellular's way of wishing you a very merry Christmas.

30¢/min. IDD

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SATURDAY Special

'Spider-Man 2,' 'The Aviator' among AFI's top films of 2004

LOS ANGELES—The superhero adventures "Spider-Man 2" and "The Incredibles" made the American Film Institute's list of 2004's top 10 movies.

Also on the list released recently were the not-yet-released Howard Hughes film biography, "The Aviator," directed by Martin Scorsese, and "Million Dollar Baby," directed by Clint Eastwood, who also starred as a gym

owner who trains a female boxer.

Rounding out the group's list, which did not rank the films, were the hit-man thriller, "Collateral"; the quirky romances, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" and "Sideways";

Football drama

The football drama, "Friday Night Lights"; the drug-smuggling drama, "Maria Full of Grace"; and "Kinsey," a film biography of sexuality researcher Alfred Kinsey.

The institute's top 10 television programs of the year were HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Deadwood," "The Sopranos" and "Something the Lord Made," ABC's "Desperate Housewives" and "Lost," FX's "Nip/Tuck" and "The Shield," Fox's "Arrested Development" and Comedy Central's "South Park."

The lists were chosen by 13-member panels of filmmakers, critics, scholars and AFI board members. Top films and shows will be honored at an AFI luncheon on Jan. 14.

AP



CRUISE. Played a hit man in Michael Mann's action-thriller.

'Virtual history' humanizes famous personages

By Nestor U. Torre

IN the movies, the "motion capture" technique used in "The Polar Express" has shown film people and viewers alike a new way to do animation. On TV, a similarly innovative technique was unveiled last Sunday on the Discovery Channel with the telecast of "The Secret Plot to Kill Hitler."

What made the docu-drama innovative was its effort to achieve "virtual history" by using, not actors but animated lookalikes, to portray historical characters like Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Hitler as they were during the last couple of years of World War Two.

New technique

This new technique is better than using actors, because performers often don't look exactly like the well-known personages they're portraying. With the "virtual history" technique, the on-screen characters are exact renderings of famous people, so there's greater suspension of disbelief on viewers' part.

To be sure, the technique is still a bit rough, with some of the images coming off murky, and some movements looking slightly awkward. But more work should be able to take care of those glitches in future productions.

How is "virtual history" achieved? A still photograph or newsreel shot of the famous personage is scanned by computers to extrapolate three-dimensional views from different perspectives. A modification of the "motion capture" technique could also be utilized to allow for more subtle expressions and movements.

Methods

Whatever the technique or combination of methods used, the results are good enough to encourage other producers to try their hand at similar productions in the near future.

In time, "virtual history" could even "graduate" to the big screen, so we could eventually watch a historical epic with its protagonist played, not by a well-known performer, but by an exact lookalike of the personage.

"The Secret Plot to Kill Hitler" made for fascinating viewing because it put its historical figures in private, personal situations that no newsreel footage could ever have captured.

This is a significant use of the new technique because it humanizes historical figures, and thus makes their lives more empathetic to viewers.

Wheelchair

Thus, in "Hitler," we saw Churchill working on official papers in bed all morning, and Roosevelt being lifted by his son from his bed and into his wheelchair.

Even more tellingly, the innovative docu-drama revealed that, on the same day, on July 20, 1944, not only was there an attempt on Hitler's life, but Roosevelt also had a serious medical crisis.

This coincidence provided yet another proof that, while the four main wartime protagonists had their separate agendas, their fates were linked in ways sometimes too subtle to be instantly divined.



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PHILIPPINES

Friend pens book about Marlon Brando

By Bob Thomas

LOS ANGELES—Producer George Englund and his wife, actress Gloria Leachman, attended a party in 1956 given by Burgess Meredith for the elite of Hollywood—the men in coats and ties, the women in dazzling gowns.

Enter Marlon Brando, in a leather jacket.

Brando, the rage of the movie world then and noted for his aloofness, cordially greeted everyone. Then, he spotted Leachman, once a fellow student at the Actors Studio. He hurried over to her, met her husband and spent the entire evening talking to them.

Protection

He asked the couple if they would go out on a double date with him the following evening—he had a date with the fiery Italian star Anna Magnani. "I'm afraid she's going to climb all over me, and I need some protection," the actor appealed.

The Englunds agreed, and Brando escaped safely.

This past June, Englund visited the ailing actor at his hilltop home with commanding views of both Beverly Hills and the San Fernando Valley. Brando, his face puffy with a stubble of gray-white beard, lay in bed virtually help-

less. Even though he had lost 80 pounds during his illness, he still was an enormous caricature of his once muscular self.

He drifted in and out of awareness, coughed painfully and was incontinent. Yet, he seemed warmed by the presence of Englund. After three hours, Englund left with a promise of returning. Brando died the next day.

Extraordinary friendship

Thus, the beginning and the end of an extraordinary friendship that lasted 48 years, minus seven years when they weren't speaking. Together they traveled the world, met kings and presidents, talked with savants and peasants, made "The Ugly American" with Brando as star and Englund as director, consoled each other's family tragedies, hatched business deals that would later be dumped by Brando.

Englund relates the saga in a new book, "The Way It's Never Been Done Before," the title a reference to Brando's revolutionary style of acting.

Englund decided to write the biography when it appeared that Brando would not survive pulmonary fibrosis, a hardening of the lungs. He had hoped Brando would write a foreword.

"Most of the other books about Marlon were written by people



BRANDO. Distaste for authority.

who never knew Marlon," Englund reasoned. "I did." Englund, 78, arrived for an interview at a Valley bistro looking as trim and athletic as when he played beach volleyball on the sands of Santa Monica.

Why did Brando become obese?

"When he came to Hollywood, he had power of a magnitude that nobody ever had before," Englund theorized. "He'd cow anybody, including heads of studios. During those times, he never had to exercise self-discipline. What-

ever he wanted, he could get—anything, anybody, anywhere.

Genetic propensity

"He had a genetic propensity for gaining weight; his father was a portly man. Another thing was Marlon's desire to do things not the way they had been done before. He gained weight more prodigiously than anyone else. And, there was that lack of workaholic that was instilled in him by his father."

The book stresses Brando's

haunted youth with a mother who was often too drunk to care for him and his sisters, and an absent father who returned to berate his son. Brando's suspicion of anyone who might take advantage of him and his distaste of authority stem from his childhood, Englund believes.

For "The Ugly American" (1963), a study of U.S. entanglement in Southeast Asia, Brando chose Englund, who had never directed a film.

Director and star worked compatibly during the location filming in Thailand, and most of the interiors at Universal Studio. Then, Brando became "removed and uncommunicative." Even though Englund was his best friend, Brando had started to view him as an authority figure.

10 children

In his late years, money became a problem. The support of 10 children, his own island in Tahiti and many other expenses caused him to accept roles in humdrum movies. In 1990, he dreamed up another moneymaking scheme: He would write his autobiography, and Englund would be his agent.

Englund, who had never been an agent, reluctantly accepted the task. All major publishers were interested, and Random

House offered \$3.5 million. Englund raised the ante to \$5 million, and the publisher agreed.

Then, for two years, Brando didn't write a word, and the publisher wanted the advance back. Brando suggested that Englund write the book, but Brando would pay him only \$25,000.

Englund declined after experts advised him that the job was worth up to 50 percent of the advance. Another writer was hired, and the book was a publishing disaster.

Offer

After Englund had negotiated an offer to build a first-class hotel on his Tahitian island, Brando killed the deal—"Not enough money."

Englund's patience was finally exhausted, and he quit. The seven-year gap in the friendship began. It ended through double tragedies: The deaths of Englund's young son and Brando's sister. The two longtime companions exchanged notes of condolences, and Englund made a phone call.

"It was pathetically simple," the author writes, "no looking back, no painful review. We were happy to hear each other's voice again, and we started talking like the Marlon and George we had always been." AP

An early Christmas gift

By Behn Cervantes

POET Domingo Landicho didn't feel right that a fellow artist was disappointed that there were no Filipino lyrics to the beloved Christmas carol, "Silent Night."

I had earlier asked a student to go to the Filipino Department for a copy of the lyrics, but she came back saying there was none. There was none at the University of the Philippines?

I was flabbergasted because I remember that, when I was detained at Camp Bagong Diwa in 1977, the group assembled there used to sing the carol in Tagalog.

Translation

It was the translation of Ed Maranan, who was confined in the same camp with Satur Ocampo, Ed de la Torre, Nana Sanchez, Pepe Luna, Julius Fortuna and Peter Mutuc.

I loved the Maranan lyrics.

They were not a direct translation of the original English words but instead, his version captured the lyricism of the German carol which he liberally instilled with nationalistic sentiments, as poets were wont to infuse any work during that decade.

I saved a mimeographed copy of his compilation of carol translations but after sometime, they can't be found among my papers!

Lyrics

I went directly to the department myself and asked why in the name of Christmas spirit didn't the Filipino Department of the State University have a copy of those lyrics? I further explained that my class was due to entertain *lolas* and *lolas* in the Anawim community in Montalban.

I was disappointed, indeed I had already envisioned the res-

dents of Anawim singing the carol in Tagalog! Bo Sanchez and Marissa Chikamco in Montalban would be so delighted with our little Tagalog version for the elderly in that rustic setting.

Seeing my disappointment, Domeng promised to write me lyrics to the carol. Yes, he would also translate "Adeste Fidelis." Of course, I was grateful.

First stage director

Domeng stressed, however, that he was doing it especially for me. After all, I was his first stage director in his own play, "Dapithapon," starring Gloria Diaz as Gregoria de Jesus and Johnny Delgado and Dennis Asensio alternating as Andres Bonifacio. I had forgotten about his acting debut, but that 1977 UP Rep production quickly came to mind.

To my delight, he came to the

office less than an hour with the lyrics of "Silent Night" and "Adeste Fidelis." It was already the 13th of December, so the Tagalog translations were my earliest Christmas gifts this year. Domeng grandly gifted me with his latest creation.

Domeng was beaming with goodwill and cheer. He made me very happy. Therefore, in the spirit of Christmas, I would like to share poet Domingo Landicho's goodwill with all of you. With these Filipino lyrics go my own Yuletide wish for this joyous season.

'Gabing Dalisay'

Gabing payapa, gabing payapa

Ang lahat, kaluwathatian
Sa Birhen at Anak na hirang
Ang lahat ay nangangapugay
Diyos anak ang sumalang
Diyos ng santibutan!



NICKELODEON'S resident genius will be seen in eight special episodes.

Try to beat Jimmy Neutron

WANT to be at par with Nickelodeon's resident genius? If you're 7 to 13 years old and love Jimmy Neutron, join Nickelodeon and Anchor Wham's "Can You Beat Jimmy?" on-air contest. But hurry! Contest ends Dec. 30, 2004.

How? Simple! From now until Dec. 30, Nickelodeon will feature eight special Jimmy Neutron episodes over four weeks, showcasing Jimmy's best inventions. Each specific episode will be followed by a "Can you beat Jimmy?" pre-contest spot.

All you have to do is watch Jimmy Neutron in action, pick up some ideas on his inventions, and see how Nick's whiz kid puts it together.

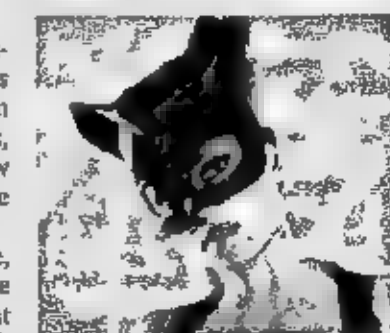
Now, to beat Jimmy, you should start creating your own invention but remember to include an Anchor Wham bottle in your creation and send your inventions to Nickelodeon!

Only six inventions will be chosen by the Nick creative team. If your invention is picked, you get to see yourself and your invention on Nickelodeon!

Aside from that, a certified genius like you gets to win Jimmy's Genius Survival Kit! And who says the four runners-up go home with nothing? They also win Jimmy's special edition watches!

Watch out for pre-contest spots over Nick, or check out www.nickspat.com.

SIA's entertaining way to fly "Catwoman" leads the entertainment charge on Singapore



"CATWOMAN." Featured on top airlines' December video treats.

Airlines (SIA) this month. Get drawn to SIA's lot of 400 plus entertainment options via its world-renowned KrisWorld, which has gotten even better with Wisemen, the world's first audio-video-on-demand in-flight entertainment system.

Passengers can fast forward, rewind, or pause through their choice of video or audio entertainment. That means you can watch the movie or listen to the program anytime you want. No more waiting! Truly, SIA's the great way to fly this Christmas season!

Featured cinematic blockbusters this month, besides "Catwoman," are "Before Sunset," "Shark Tale," "Elf," "Paparazzi," "De-Lovely," "We Don't Live Here Anymore," "Love Actually," "Princess Diaries 2: The Royal Engagement," "Wicker Park," among others.

If it's the classics you prefer, George Seaton's must-see "Miracle on 34th Street" is sure to turn on the Christmas charm.

KrisWorld features hit TV comedy series, as well: "Frasier," "Everybody Loves Raymond," "Friends," "Two and a Half Men," and "The 70s Show."

For those into dramatic TV series, there's "CSI," "Daredevil," "Monk," plus countless shows and documentaries on technology, music, sports, lifestyle, travel, business and fashion.

Movies on TV

On HBO, Dec. 25 at 9 a.m., "Secret Santa." 5:25 p.m., "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood." 11:25 p.m., "The Matrix Reloaded." Dec. 26 at 10:55 a.m., "Alive." 11:30 p.m., "The Ring." Dec. 27 at 1:30 p.m., "About Schmidt." 7 p.m., "Tears of the Sun." 10:30 p.m., "Doc Hollywood." 12:15 p.m., "Soapdish." On Cinemax, Dec. 25 at 12:15 p.m., "Black Hawk Down." 10:45 p.m., "A Few Good Men." Dec. 26 at 12 noon, "American Crime." 7 p.m., "The Sum of All Fears." Dec. 27 at 9:30 a.m., "Strictly Ballroom." 5 p.m., "Nuts." 9 p.m., "City by the Sea." 1:50 a.m., "Pillow Talk."

'Kekexili' wins best film at Chinese Oscars

TAICHUNG, Taiwan—A bleak portrayal of life on a Tibetan plateau won best film at the Chinese-language version of the Oscars recently, becoming the first entry from China to bag the top prize in Taiwan.

"Kekexili: Mountain Patrol," a second feature by Lu Chuan beat internationally acclaimed director Wong Kar Wai's latest movie, "2046," at the Golden Horse Awards, which showcases films from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

Hong Kong's Andy Lau took the best actor award for his role in the popular cop drama, "Infernal Affairs III," after losing his bid for three consecutive years.

Thriving career

"It must be difficult for some of you to believe that I can act," joked Lau, who also has a thriving career as a pop singer, after accepting his award in a crisp white suit.

Taiwan has played host to the Golden Horse Awards for 41 years, but contestants from Hong Kong and China have stolen the spotlight in recent years as Taiwan's once-thriving movie industry is in decline. This year's top prizes were distributed more evenly, however.

The best actress award went to Taiwan's Yang Kuei Mei, a veteran actress and four-time Golden Horse nominee, for her role in "The Moon also Rises," a melancholy drama about a divorced single mother and her adolescent daughter in a seaside town.

"I lost year after year, but I have been brave. I finally won," said the actress who, overcome with emotion, burst into tears onstage.

"We must support Taiwan



LU. His second feature became the first entry from China to bag top prize.



LAU. Best actor for his performance in "Infernal Affairs 3."

movies. They are Taiwan's culture," Yang said in the central city of Taichung, where the glittering red-carpet ceremony was held this year.

Cannes winner "2046," about the love life of an erotic novelist played by Hong Kong's Tony Leung, went into the awards as a favorite with eight nominations,

but only won two trophies: best art direction and best original film score.

It lost best film to "Kekexili," which is based on the true story of a journalist who joins a Tibetan volunteer patrol chasing a ring of poachers trading in antelope wool. The film also took best cinematography for Cao Yu.

Director Lu Chuan said he was glad he could obtain a visa at the last minute and come to Taiwan to receive the award. Taiwan imposes strict rules on visitors from its political foe, China, which claims the self-governing island as part of its territory.

Hong Kong's Johnnie To was awarded best director for his "Breaking News," which combines the territory's favorite cop drama genre with its paparazzi-style journalism.

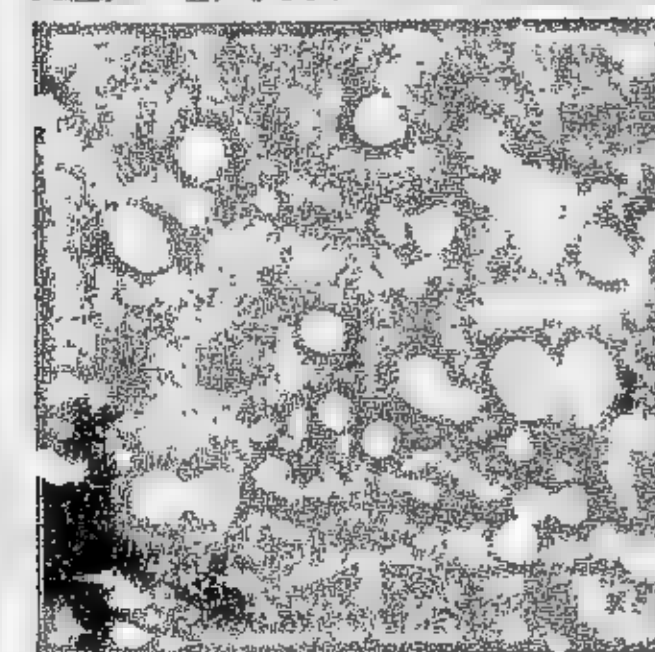
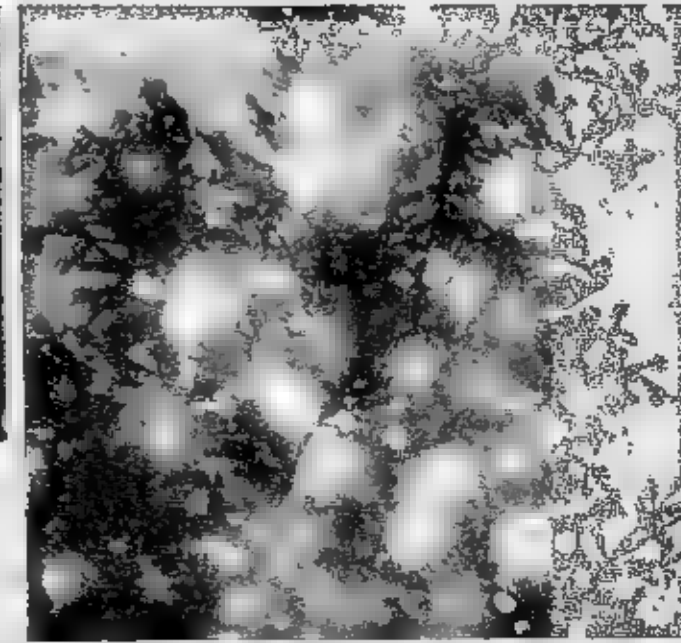
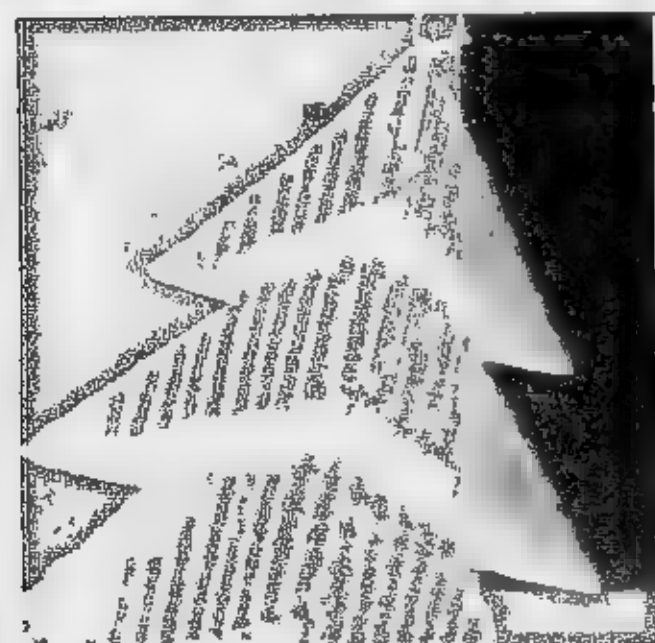
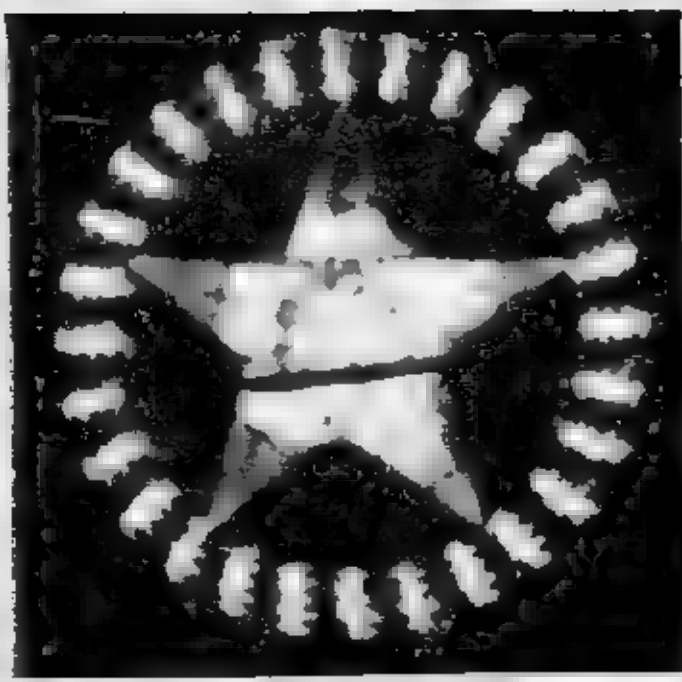
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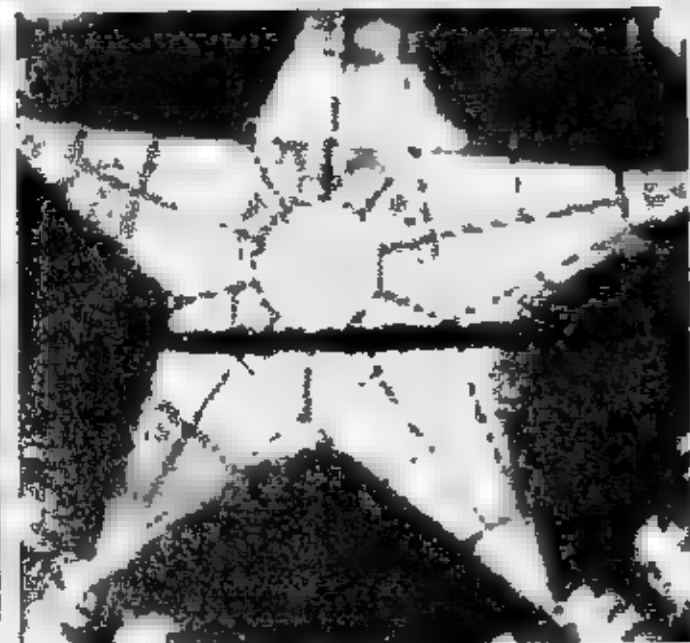
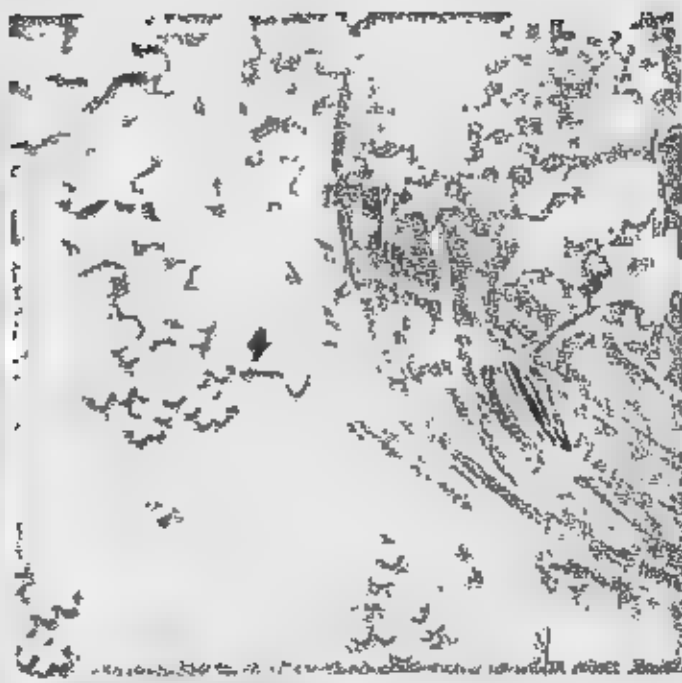
Best supporting actress went to Bai Ling for her role in "Three...Extremes: Dumplings," while Daniel Wu bagged the best supporting actor for his role in Hong Kong's "New Police Story." "New Police Story," starring Jackie Chan, also bagged best visual effects and best action choreography.

Renowned Taiwan-born director Ang Lee, whose martial arts epic, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," had won four Oscars, attended the ceremony to show his support for Chinese-language films.

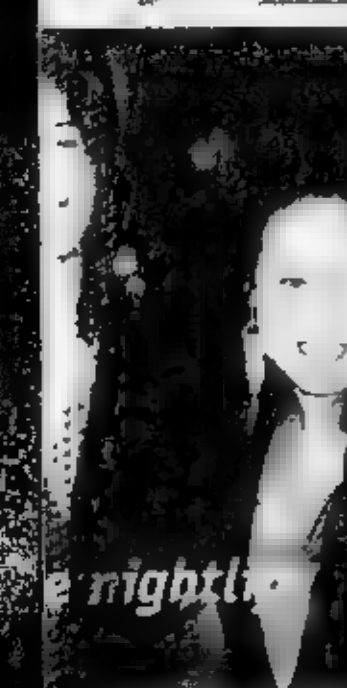
"Some things never change, such as our passion for Chinese movies," Lee said, adding that Chinese films could compete with better-funded Hollywood blockbusters if filmmakers use their creativity.

Reuters





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'Little Britain' crowned UK comedy king

LONDON—The quirky sketch show, "Little Britain," beat off BBC rival "The Office" to take top honors at the British Comedy Awards 2004 recently.

The show, which parodies life in suburban Britain and features a bizarre array of characters, won the best TV comedy award, while its stars Matt Lucas and David Walliams were jointly named best TV comedy actor.

"We do get the chance to perform in 'Little Britain' alongside great people," said Lucas.

The show, which began life on radio, developed a cult audience on digital channel BBC3 thanks to the popularity of its characters, such as "Dafydd," who refuses to accept he is not the only gay in a Welsh village.

Success

Its success prompted a move to the mainstream BBC1 channel although its content had to be toned down.

There was some consolation for "The Office," which swept the awards last year, with Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant winning a special prize for writing the hit comedy.

"The show has won an awful lot of awards in the last couple of years, too much," Gervais said.

"It's got embarrassing to be hon-



LUCAS:
Shared best
actor award
with co-star
David
Walliams.

est." The awards ceremony, broadcast live from ITV1's London studios on the South Bank, has gained a notorious reputation for swearing and general tomfoolery.

This year was no exception with Brigitte Nielsen, former wife of Sylvester Stallone, stroking the head of former British government minister Robin Cook while handing out one award.

Other notable winners included presenters Ant McPartlin and Declan Donnelly who added the awards for best comedy entertainment personality and best comedy entertainment program to their growing list of accolades.

"The Simpsons" was named best international comedy show and its

creator Matt Groening picked up an outstanding contribution award from Professor Stephen Hawking, who has appeared on the cult cartoon.

Tactless doctor

Caroline Quentin was named best TV comedy actress and Martin Clunes' "Doc Martin," a drama about a tactless doctor living in a small Cornish village, won best TV comedy drama.

Catherine Tate won best comedy newcomer for "The Catherine Tate Show," "Nighty Night" was named Britain's best new TV comedy and "School of Rock" beat "Shaun of the Dead" to the best comedy film award.

Reuters

Third 'Lord of the Rings' film voted 2004's top film in BBC poll

LONDON—It's a hat trick for Tolkien.

"The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King"—the third film based on the trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien—has been voted best film of the year in a poll for the British Broadcasting Corp. television program "Film 2004," hosted by Jonathan Ross.

Title

The two previous Lord of the Rings films, "The Two Towers" and "The Fellowship Of The Ring," took the title in 2002 and 2003, respectively.

"Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind," starring Kate Winslet and Jim

Carrey, was at No. 2 this year, followed by another Winslet movie, "Finding Neverland," that starred Johnny Depp as Peter Pan creator J.M. Barrie.

"Lost In Translation," a quirky film which starred Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson, was fourth, with "Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban" coming in fifth.

The low-budget British film, "Shaun of the Dead," was at No. 6, followed by the Chinese martial arts epic, "Hero."

Animated hit, "The Incredibles," blockbuster "Spider-Man 2" and the Tom Cruise thriller, "Collateral," completed the top 10.



McKELLEN. Played Gandalf in the "LOTR" trilogy.



DAMON. New thriller after "Bourne Supremacy."



DICAPRIO. Begged off from Robert De Niro's project.

Damon to replace DiCaprio in spy flick

LOS ANGELES—"Bourne Identity" star Matt Damon has signed on to replace Leonardo DiCaprio in Robert De Niro's new spy film, "The Good Shepherd," the industry press said recently.

Damon, 34, is taking over from "Titanic" megastar DiCaprio in the \$110-million project that tells the story of the US Central Intelligence Agency through the eyes of an agent, Daily Variety said.

Project

It is unclear why DiCaprio has left the project in which he was due to co-star.

The disappearance of the movie's star

comes after Initial Entertainment Group pulled out of financing the big-budget movie.

De Niro is directing, producing and co-starring in the film that is due to begin production in March, and will be distributed in North America by Universal Pictures. The film is loosely based on the life of famed CIA Cold War spook, James Jesus Angleton.

"The Good Shepherd" tells the story of James Wilson, played by Damon and De Niro at different stages of the character's life, who is recruited to become a founding member of the American spy agency, and follows him through his 40-year career.

AFP

Remembering the characters who made New York theater worth watching in 2004

NEW YORK—An authoritarian nun. A paranoid young man and his willing helpmate. A delightfully interfering mother. A firebrand AIDS activist. A low-comedy Greek god. A serial killer and the mother of one of his victims.

They are among the characters who made New York theater worth watching in 2004. Here then, a top 10 list of the year's best shows—and the performers—who brought them to life:

Bracing drama

—"Doubt": Just in time, John Patrick Shanley's bracing drama came to the rescue of a disappointing fall season. The play stars the extraordinary Cherry Jones as Sister Aloysius, a no-nonsense principal of a Catholic grade school in the Bronx borough of New York City. The woman has her suspicions about Father Flynn and has interest in one of the school's young male students, and she's out to prove them. Therein lies the play. One thing about "Doubt" is certain: This Manhattan Theater Club production undoubtedly will make its way from off-Broadway to Broadway sometime in 2005.

—"Bug": Tracy Letts is a triple-threat kind of a guy—an actor, director and playwright. It was as a playwright, though, that Letts scored big with "Bug," a vivid tale of trailer-trash debauchery. As two lost souls united in a seedy Oklahoma City motel room, Shannon Cochran and Michael Shannon were just about perfect in their portrayal of all-consuming paranoia.

—"Well": Lisa Kron's freewheeling and very funny memoir at the Public Theater dealt, at times, with the star's health issues and how she coped. But it found its heart in the performance of Jayne Houdyshell, portraying Kron's mother, a woman who couldn't help having her say—whether it was wanted or not—about her daughter's life.

Serial killer

—"Frozen": An unnerving drama by Bryony Lavery about a serial killer and the lives he destroyed, particularly the mother of a little girl he murdered. Brian R. O'Byrne, in a Tony-winning performance, was the murderer, and a moving Swoosie Kurtz the child's brokenhearted mother who bravely put her life back together.

—"The Normal Heart": Nearly 20 years after it was first seen off-Broadway, Larry Kramer's call to arms about the AIDS crisis remains a potent piece of political theater. This Public Theater revival, which had too brief a run, was ignited by Raul Esparza as a committed protester—not unlike Kramer—who was unafraid to shout to get what he wanted.

—"The Frogs": Nathan Lane played the Greek god, Dionysos, in this mixture of low comedy and high-minded satire, faced with a Stephen Sondheim score that included a half-dozen new songs. The plot was loosely—very loosely—based on the Aristophanes' classic and concerns a quest to find a great writer to save the world. Will it be William Shakespeare or George Bernard Shaw? With Roger Bart, another accomplished clown, joining Lane on stage, "The Frogs" proved to be a show that could, without hesitation, be called



KURTZ. Portrays brokenhearted mother in "Frozen."

a real musical comedy.

—"Twelve Angry Men": Philip Bosco and Boyd Gaines head the cast of the current Roundabout Theater Company production of Reginald Rose's jury-room, life-and-death drama, which began life as a TV program and then became a movie in the 1950s. The play may creak, but the production, directed by Scott Elia, does not. It's ensemble acting at its finest.




—"Gem of the Ocean": August Wilson's latest play in his monumental, decade-by-decade look at the black experience in the 20th century. The mystical, magical "Gem," set in 1904, actually begins the cycle and features an amazing performance by Phylicia Rashad as the ancient Aunt Esther, a repository of black wisdom since the beginning of slavery. It was quite a year for Rashad, who in June won a Tony Award for playing the matriarchal Lena Younger in last season's hit revival of Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun" that brought Sean Combs to Broadway.


Cloning

—"A Number": Caryl Churchill looks at cloning in this current New York Theater Workshop production, and her play is an intriguing look at whether nature or nurture makes the man. In his first New York stage appearance in years, Sam Shepard is a believable, guilt-ridden father trying to make sense of his many look-alike offspring. But it's the incredible Dallas Roberts, as three distinct versions of the son, who blazingly brings Churchill's provocative work to life.

—"Barbara Cook's Broadway": The most satisfying musical-theater experience of the year. In her latest one-woman show, Cook, the great ingenue of Broadway's golden age, saluted composers and lyricists who wrote at the same time she was building her career in the New York theater. At 77 and still in marvelous voice, she has earned the right to be called legendary.

AP



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Greeks happy with Oliver Stone's 'Alexander'

ATHERNS—Mainstream Greek audiences and film critics have welcomed Oliver Stone's film, "Alexander," relieved that it did not depict the nation's most revered hero as gay, blood-thirsty and non-Greek, as they feared.

"The film is one of the best promotion campaigns that Greece could ever have," state television NET said recently, after the three-hour epic had a massive release in some 80 theaters across the country.

Innuendos

"The movie is verbose, but it accurately deals with historical facts," conservative daily Kathimerini said. "The few innuendos about Alexander's alleged bisexuality were almost imperceptible," a viewer told NET.

A lawyer's group that had initiated legal action to censor the film dropped their case after watching a movie preview.

History is a key ingredient of modern Greeks' national identity. Same-sex relations are stigmatized in the country, and average Greeks reject no-



JOLIE AND FARRELL. Play mother and son in film bio of Greek warrior.

tions that homosexuality was common among their ancestors.

Greeks also feared the film could provide ammunition to their northern neighbor Macedonia, much of whose Slav and Albanian population claim Alexander as part of their na-

tional heritage.

Greece refuses to recognize the former Yugoslav republic as "Macedonia" for fear that the name implies territorial claims on the adjacent, same-name northern Greek province. Alexander's birthplace in fourth century BC. AFP



WONDER TO EMINEM: "Kicking someone when he's down is not a good thing."



Stevie Wonder bashes Eminem for Jackson criticism

LOS ANGELES—In a rare public outburst, Stevie Wonder has blasted Eminem for ridiculing Michael Jackson in a video, and suggested the rapper was hypocritical because he owed his success to poor and black people.

Jackson himself has already lambasted Eminem's video for the song, "Just Lose It," which makes light of child molestation charges against the self-styled "King of Pop." Wonder joined the fray by telling Billboard magazine that he was "really disappointed" in Eminem.

Respect

"Kicking someone when he's down is not a good thing," Wonder was quoted as telling the

music industry trade publication. "I have much respect for his work, though I don't think he's as good as 2Pac. But, I was disappointed that he would let himself go to such a level."

People of color

Added Wonder, "He has succeeded on the backs of people predominantly in that lower pay bracket, people of color. So, for him to come out like that is bull." A spokesman for Eminem was not available for comment.

The song, hailed by the Los Angeles Times as a "playful look at celebrity voyeurism," is expected to be among the nominees when contenders for the annual Grammy Awards are unveiled. Reuters

'Mary Poppins' opens to rave reviews

LONDON—"Mary Poppins," the musical, conjured magical reviews from the British press at its opening night.

"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," wrote The Times of London in a five-star rating of a performance, declaring the big-budget show "better in every way than the Disney film."

The tale of the eccentric, umbrella-toting nanny "simply blows away the opposition from rival West End musicals," commented The Independent, adding that its star Laura Michelle Kelly was "practically perfect in every way."

London's Evening Standard splashed a breathless review over two pages headlined: "A spoonful of sensation."

Rooftop dance number

The Guardian's reviewer was slow to warm to the show, but eventually was transported to "seventh heaven" by the chimney-sweeps' rooftop dance number.

A crowd liberally studded with British show biz figures—and their children—packed the Prince Edward Theater to see one of the year's most eagerly anticipated London productions.

The theater world hopes the show—staged by Walt Disney Co. and mega-producer Cameron Mackintosh—will bring just the injection of excitement and cash that the West End needs after a string of box-office disappointments.

It's been 70 years since P.L. Travers dreamt up Mary Poppins for her series of 1930s children's books, and 40 years since Julie Andrews brought the no-nonsense babysitter to life on the screen.

Now, theatergoers must judge whether the latest interpretation of the classic story still has the magic of the originals.

Sentimental side

Some critics thought it went one better, toughening up the film's sentimental side. "I never thought in my wildest fantasies that Walt Disney's syrup mountain of a film could be worked up into such a sharp, thoughtful stage musical," wrote Nicholas de Jongh in the Evening Standard.

The warm opening night crowd cheered Gavin Lee's loose-limbed chimney sweep Bert and Kelly's stern but surprising Mary as they tied the Banks children on magical adventures in Edwardian London.

There was particular applause for scene-stealing Jenny Galway as the cook, Mrs. Brill—and for lighting and effects that justified the show's multimillion-pound budget.

Thomas Schumacher, head of Disney's theatrical division, is certain that Mary Poppins' enduring qualities—"magic, zazziness, inappropriateness, a curious disrespect for authority"—will thrive onstage.

"One thing Mary Poppins says,



KELLY. Rave reviews for her portrayal of the umbrella-toting nanny.

in the book and in our show, is, 'I never explain anything,'" Schumacher told The Associated Press. "That allows her extraordinary freedom. We don't even know who the heck this woman is. Is she a witch? Is she a fairy? Is she a guardian angel? She explodes into the imagination."

Disney, which owns the songs and storylines from the 1964 movie, and Mackintosh, who holds the stage rights to the Poppins books, agreed in 2001 to collaborate on a stage adaptation, after years of impasse.

Credits

Mackintosh's credits include megahits "Cats" and "Les Misérables."

Also involved in the new "Mary Poppins" are director Richard Eyre, former head of Britain's National Theater, and choreographer Matthew Bourne, creator of a renowned all-male "Swan Lake" and the Olivier award-winning "Play Without Words."

The show's book is by Academy Award-winning scriptwriter Julian Fellowes ("Gosford Park," "Vanity Fair"), while composer George Stiles and lyricist Anthony Drewe have written six new songs to complement the film's tunes by brothers Robert and Richard Sherman.

The team is walking a fine line, trying to appeal to fans of the

books and movie while adapting the story to a new medium. New songs join old favorites like "A Spoonful of Sugar," "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" and "Chim Chim Cher-ee."

Advance ticket sales are strong for the show's initial booking period through September 2005.

The creators say they're confident the lives of the wealthy, Edwardian-era Banks family will still speak to audiences. The story's emotional tone, they believe, is strikingly modern.

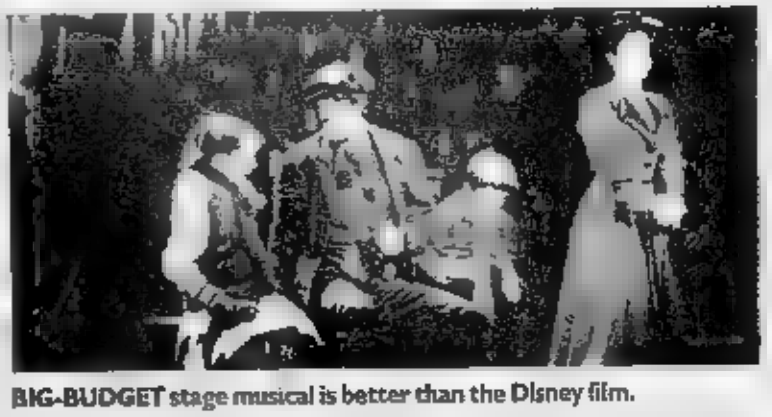
Eyre has said that the story "is about an unhappy family being healed." AP

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SHERYL JAY and EDDIE CRUZ
ANGELICA JOHNSON and CARLO CRUZ
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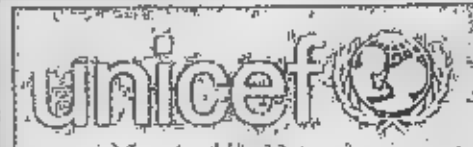
BIG-BUDGET stage musical is better than the Disney film.

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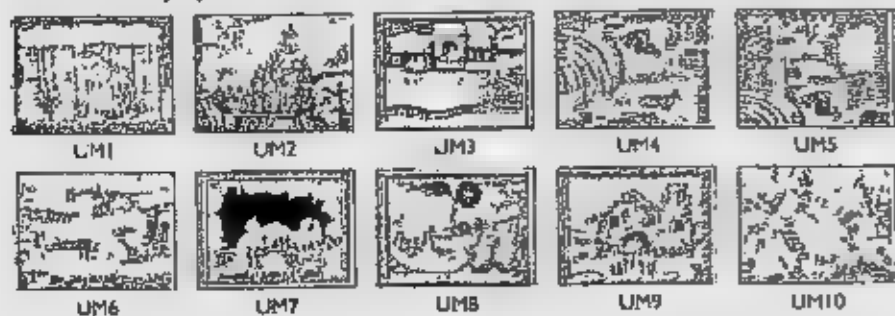
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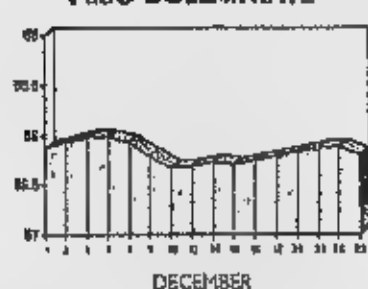
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 As of 5 p.m., Dec. 23, 2004

GOLD: \$441.80-442.30
 per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2004

December 24, 2004	Country	Unit	Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
	United States	Dollar	0.746882	1.000000	56.1440
	Japan	Yen	0.007169	0.009598	0.5389
	United Kingdom	Pound	1.430056	1.914700	107.4989
	Hong Kong	Dollar	0.095983	0.128512	7.2152
	Switzerland	Franc	0.647941	0.857528	48.7065
	Canada	Dollar	0.601742	0.805672	45.2336
	Singapore	Dollar	0.455555	0.609942	34.2446
	Australia	Dollar	0.572191	0.766107	43.0123
	Bahrain	Dinar	1.981224	2.652661	148.9310
	Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.199163	0.266660	14.9714
	Brunei	Dollar	0.454170	0.608088	34.1405
	Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0060
	Thailand	Baht	0.019128	0.025611	1.4379
	JAE	Dhram	0.203377	0.272301	15.2881
	Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.336900	75.1712
	Argentina	Peso	0.252197	0.337667	18.9580
	Brazil	Real	0.276213	0.369822	20.7633
	Denmark	Kroner	0.134510	0.180096	10.1113
	India	Rupia	0.017056	0.022836	1.2821
	Malaysia	Ringgit	0.196574	0.263193	14.7767
	Mexico	New Peso	0.057039	0.089759	5.0394
	New Zealand	Dollar	0.532460	0.729111	40.0257
	South Africa	Rand	0.132247	0.177056	9.9412
	Korea	Won	0.000710	0.000998	0.0533
	Taiwan	Ni Dollar	0.023152	0.030998	1.7404

STOCK MARKET

Markets closed for the holidays

FINANCIAL markets were closed yesterday and on Monday for the Christmas holidays.

Share prices managed to close 0.99 percent higher on Thursday, lifted by continued bargain-hunting and year-end window-dressing.

Traders said the market would likely post further gains in the remaining two trading days of this year, but the expected rise may not be enough to break the main index's recent five-year high of 1,855.

Stock trading resumes tomorrow and on the 29th, before closing again until after the New Year.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 17.75 points last Thursday to 1,807.49 after trading between 1,789.74 and 1,814.04. The broader all-shares index rose 3.64 points to 1,150.20.

Volume totaled 1.38 billion shares worth P626.96 million from 1.86 billion shares worth P458.9 million on Wednesday.

Gainers beat losers 46 to 24, with 41 stocks unchanged.

"The market has started to pick up again and we may likely see this trend for the remainder of the trading sessions (this year)," said Ron Rodrigo of Accord Capital Equities.

Foreign fund managers were net buyers, suggesting they were either window-dressing their portfolios for the year-end or positioning ahead of the New Year, Rodrigo added.

Telecom giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) was the most actively traded stock last Thursday, up P10 to P1,320.

Bank of the Philippine Islands gained 50 centavos to close at P51.50. Shopping mall developer SM Prime Holdings rose 20 centavos to P7.80. Ayala Corp. closed unchanged at P6.50, while its real estate flagship, Ayala Land Inc., was up 10 centavos at P7.10.

SEC OKs Pitel capital hike

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has approved the plan by Pitel Telephone Corp. (Pitel) to raise its capital to P12.8 billion from P3.5 billion.

The increase in capital will allow Pitel to accommodate the full conversion of series "K" preferred shares into common shares.

This will also allow Pitel to have available common shares for issuance upon the exercise of conversion rights by preferred stockholders.

Pitel is increasing its capital by P9.3 billion to P12.8 billion while its subscribed capital will also increase to P11.8 billion from P2.5 billion.

In June 2001, 59.29 million series "K" preferred convertible shares were issued at P340 each or equivalent to P20.75 billion to

creditors that participated in its debt-restructuring program.

Pitel's sister firm, Smart Communications Inc. acquired 59.29 million series "K" shares from parent Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Smart has already converted 4.82 million of these shares into common shares of Pitel last July.

The company now wants to convert the remaining 54.48 million series "K" shares worth P108.93 million into 9.25 billion common shares at an issue price of P11.52 billion.

Smart will own 92 percent of Pitel after converting the Series "K" preferred shares into common shares followed by the purchase of PLDT's remaining common Pitel shares. Smart is buying 92 percent of Pitel from PLDT.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Deutsche Bank ranked top securities dealer

DEUTSCHE Bank Manila has been named the top leading Government Securities Engage Dealer among private commercial banks by the Bureau of the Treasury.

The ranking acknowledged banks that have achieved the greatest market share during the Treasury's primary auction for treasury bills and bonds from October 2003 to October 2004.

Enrico Cruz, Deutsche Bank's chief country officer for the Philippines, said: "This shows clearly that our focus on delivering the highest quality securities dealing expertise is acknowledged by our clients. We will continue to innovate and offer our clients' leading edge product capabilities and solutions."

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By Michelle Y. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has reiterated its call for the immediate legislation of the proposed revenue-raising measures, saying the passage of the "sin" taxes law was not enough to dispel threats of a credit rating downgrade.

The DOF said the measures, which include an increase in taxes and a reduction of fiscal incentives, should be passed in the first quarter of next year to convince credit-rating agencies that the Philippines was capable of squarely addressing its fiscal problem.

"The DOF stressed the need for further reform measures to be passed in early 2005 as credit-rating agencies continue to focus on the country's need to improve on its revenues-to-GDP ratio, currently one of the lowest in Asia," said the joint statement of the government's economic team.

The Philippines avoided a credit-rating downgrade by Fitch Ratings, which decided to retain the country's ratings, and merely revised its outlook on the Philippines from stable to negative.

The Philippines avoided a credit-rating downgrade by Fitch Ratings, which decided to retain the country's ratings, and merely revised its outlook on the Philippines from stable to negative.

The move came after the government was able to sell the Masinloc coal-fired power plant, the biggest asset of the state-owned National Power Corp., and ease the power firm's debt burden. Fitch's move was also influenced by the decision of the Supreme Court to open the mining industry to foreign investors, which the business sector hailed as a significant step to improve the country's image abroad.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amato said the successful bidding of Masinloc, the SC decision and the relatively high gross domestic product growth for the first three quarters of the year, which averaged at 6.5 percent, were the factors that helped save the country from a downgrade by Fitch.

However, the country still faces a possible downgrade by Moody's Investors Service, which earlier said the slow progress of the fiscal reform measures in Congress could weigh down on the country's credit rating.

The economic team earlier said Congress should pass at least three measures before the end of this year to ease downside pressure on the credit rating. Congress, however, was only able to pass the "sin" taxes law, which raised imposts on cigarettes and alcohol.

CONGRESS/B2

BSP to spend \$1B for debt service in 2005

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas will spend at least \$1 billion for its external debt servicing in 2005, part of which will be funded by fresh foreign borrowings in the second semester.

In an interview, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said that out of the institution's total financing requirements next year, about \$800 million would consist of principal and interest payments to foreign commercial creditors.

The remainder would represent obligations to bilateral and

multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund.

The BSP's requirements would account for about 22 percent of the country's \$4.5-billion foreign debt servicing next year, excluding payments to residents and the government's contingent liabilities from independent power producers.

But Buenaventura said the BSP would not likely resort to new foreign borrowings until the second semester of next year.

"That's only because we'd like to give way to the national government, which will need the

money for the power sector restructuring," Buenaventura said.

The national government is set to absorb up to P500 billion worth of debts owed by the cash-strapped National Power Corp.

The BSP chief said there was no need for the BSP to rush into new foreign borrowings "unless there's a very good opportunity and market receptivity or if the (gross international) reserves have gone down to alarming levels."

However, he said the good opportunity to tap external borrowings would likely be in the second semester, when the benefits of the

tax reform measures pushed by the government would have been felt.

"When we've proven to the world that we're committed to fiscal consolidation and we're on our way to serious reforms, then our spreads would improve," Buenaventura said.

"But if we fail to deliver, the cost of borrowings will be higher," he said.

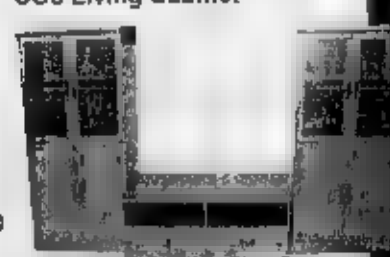
The government's economic team believed the country has overcome the inertia in passing painful fiscal reforms. For instance, the increase in excise tax-

BSP/B2

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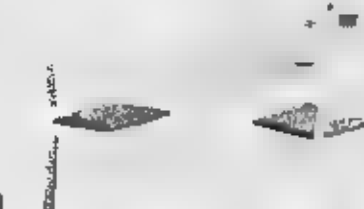
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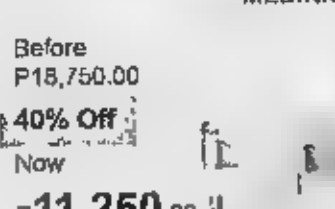


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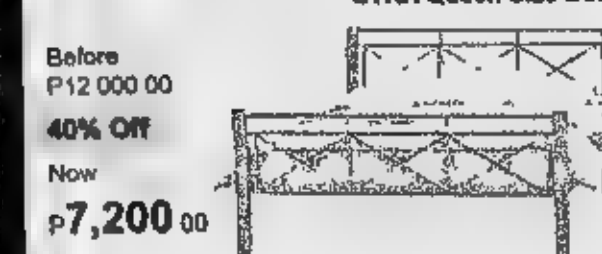
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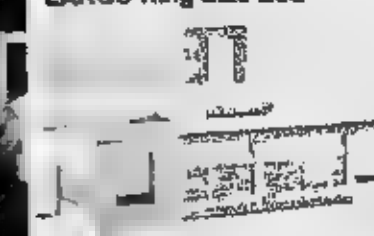
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Promo Period:
 Nov. 27 to Dec. 31, 2004.
 *Per DTD-NCR Division
 No. 111-1111 of 2004

NTC says '04 revenue hit just below P1.4B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission generated close to P1.4 billion in revenues this year out of fees and charges collected from phone, media and cable companies, according to officials.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said the agency's revenue this year was lower than the P1.8 billion collected in 2003.

He said the regulator booked about P500 million in one-time collection from Globe Telecom Inc. for unpaid dues.

"As of end-September, the NTC has already raised about P1.2 billion from fees and charges," said Solis. "By the end of the year, I think we would have collected slightly below P1.4 billion."

The NTC chief said the budget department had tasked it to collect P1.44 billion this year.

Congress had approved a bud-

get of P149 million for the NTC in 2005, Solis said. This was about P25 million more than this year's allocation.

"We have explained to Congress that last year, we realized a windfall profit of about P500 million which was non-recurring," said Solis. "It arose from collections of past due from Globe."

The NTC's collection next year should improve with plans to impose higher fees and charges. The agency also introduced a new regulatory requirement for cellular retail and repair shops.

Solis said the Commission also wanted to change the basis of the collection of spectrum users fee imposed on telecom firms for the use of radio frequencies. The spectrum fee comprises the bulk of the NTC's collection.

Of the P395.4 million in service income during the first half, nearly P381 million came from spectrum users' fee or what the NTC collects

from telecom companies for use of certain radio frequencies.

Starting January, the NTC would be collecting additional fees from the registration of cellular retailers and repair shops. Solis said that as a result of the new policy the NTC each year would earn an additional P60 million.

"There are about 15,000 shops within the NCR so if we collect annual fees of about P2,000, then we may collect about P30 million," said Solis. "If we include all these mobile phone shops, then maybe we would earn about P60 million a year."

Regulatory fees contributed P8.3 million during the first half.

The NTC is pressing the collection of P1.3 billion in overdue regulatory fees from Pritel from 1997 to September 2004.

Solis said the Commission would soon resolve the issue of unpaid fees and conflicting interpretation of the NTC regulation on these fees.

Garments exports barely up at 0.07%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LOCAL garments export industry is performing as expected and well prepared for the removal of the global quota system, according to the Garments and Textiles Export Board.

Serafin Juliano, GTEB executive director, said that as of Dec. 14, export receipts reached \$2.628 billion and barely grew at 0.07 percent against \$2.626 billion in the same period in 2003.

Juliano said that they expected this year's trade to be "in parity with export receipts for 2003."

He had earlier said there were indications that the industry had performed better than expected.

The official belied concerns from certain segments of the industry that the abolition of quotas meant closure of local garments businesses.

"That sentiment is coming from those who are bound to fail because they cannot rise to the challenges of greater competition," he said. "Actually, the local industry has had significant gains in the transition toward a quota-free world market."

Juliano said that since the (garments and textiles) industry transformation plan was launched in 2002, the net investments of new companies had reached P1.04 billion.

He said that during the period, 388 new manufacturing facilities started business while 269 factories were forced to shut down.

At the same time, 44,031 new jobs were created as against the 42,128 jobs lost.

"That means a net gain of 119 new factories and 1,903 new jobs," Juliano said. "Overall, the situation is actually improving rather than worsening."

According to Juliano, as the local industry undergoes transition, there will be closures and consolidations—but the result will always be a net gain.

As of Dec. 14, exports to the United States amounted to \$1.85 billion or 70.5 percent of total exports. This means a decline of 2.6 percent from \$1.9 billion posted a year.

Exports to the European Union went up 16 percent to \$401.6 million from \$346.5 million. This accounted for 15.3 percent of all garment exports.

Philippine Stock Exchange					
(As of December 24, 2004)					
STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Abn-Amro Bank Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	2,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	28,100
China Banking Corp.	51.5	51.5	51.5	51.5	1,817,200
China Savings Bank	57.5	57.5	57.5	57.5	1,000
Equitable PCIB Bank Inc.	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	9,200
Export-Import Bank Inc.	48	48	48	48.5	345,000
International Franch. Bank	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	243,400
Manila Commercial Bank & Trust	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	99,400
Phil. Coll. Bank & Trust	27	27	27	27	5,000
Securities Bank Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	2,500
Security Bank Corp.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	5,300
Union Bank	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	80,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	70
Manila Financial Corp.	24.85	24.85	24.80	24.80	100,000
PCIB Savings Bank	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	50
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	110	110	110	110	1,840
Sea Jia Financial Inc.	1815	1825	1815	1825	18,000
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	18,000
Bayan Telecomm. Inc.	1.7	1.74	1.7	1.74	8,091,300
Globe Telecom Inc.	855	865	855	860	14,750
Isipio Inc.	2.9	3	2.85	3	524,300
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.044	0.05	0.044	0.044	5,601,300
Manila Electric Co. Inc.	0.033	0.034	0.033	0.034	709,000
Manila Water Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	39,000
Media Broadcasting Co.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	10,000
Philippine Tel. Corp.	2.48	2.55	2.48	2.5	7,892,300
Phil. Long Dist. Tel. Co.	1315	1340	1315	1320	76,400
Telecom. Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	600,300
Philweb Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.011	8,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.75	15.75	15.75	15.75	300
Manila Electric Co. B	28	28	28	28	278,700
Palayan Corp.	3.15	3.25	3.15	3.2	3,042,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l. Sv.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	58,000
Lorance Shipping Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	100,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	100,000
Formosa Cement Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	50,000
Republic Glass Indus. Corp.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	632,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.98	1.98	1.92	1.98	821,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31	30.5	30.5	1,000
Justine Foods Corp.	20	20	20	20	545,100
Sar. Miguel Corp. A	58	58	58	58	144,900
Sar. Miguel Corp. B	75	75	74	74	100,000
Manila Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abn-Amro Bank & Hldg A	0.005	0.005	0.0048	0.0048	141,000,000
Abn-Amro Bank & Hldg B	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	11,379,000
Abn-Amro Bank & Hldg C	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	1,216,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.5	1.5	9,000
APC Group Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	1,900,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	11,600
Bancor Corp. Indus. Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	55,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.105	0.1	0.105	1,450,300
Bonanza Holdings Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	2,810,300
Crown Equities Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	80,300
Southeast Asian Cement	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	1,000,300
DAMCI Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	1,350,000
Deutsche Bank AG	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	501,000
Investment Dev. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	269,000
Manila Electric Co. A	4.85	4.75	4.65	4.7	68,000
Manila Electric Co. B	30.5	31	30.5	30.5	475,500
Manila Electric Co. C	2.44	2.55	2.4	2.45	5,298,000
Manila Electric Co. D	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	2,000,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.31	0.32	20,500,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	100,000
Realty Holdings Inc.	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	170,300
United Holdings Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	500,000
Weller Industries Inc.	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.17	140,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	3,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	1,470,000
Adelaide Hotel Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	800
Paradise Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.1	1.04	2,738,000
Laurisa & Resorts Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	90,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	636,300
Philippine Racing Club	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	14,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldg. Corp. (Pdt)	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	437,000
Manila Electric Co. Warrants	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	50,000
PILOT (10% Prft) Series A	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PILOT (10% Prft) Series B	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	234,000
PROPERTY					
Aseda Land Inc.	7	7	7	7	3,903,000
D&P Homes Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.225	0.23	5,827,300
Dyler Bay Corp.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	1,530,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	850,000
Fluorocarb. Land Inc.	1.1	1.18	1.1	1.1	8,723,000
RE-Estate Land Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	590,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	40,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	120,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.4	1.42	1,411,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.8	3,841,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	100,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.4	0.42	0.38	0.4	330,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. C	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	84,800,000
Aulas Cons. Min & Dev't	3.85	3.85	3.75	3.75	4,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.25	3.4	3.25	3.4	58,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	3,000
Luzon Cons. Min. Co. A	0.35	0.37	0.34	0.35	82,090,000
Luzon Cons. Min. Co. B	0.48	0.48	0.43	0.43	1,000
Luzon Cons. Min. Co. C	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	389,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	257,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0046	0.0046	0.0046	0.0046	128,000,000
Philippine Mining Corp. A	0.67	0.7	0.67	0.69	5,732,000
Philippine Mining Corp. B	0.71	0.75	0.71	0.73	13,780,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.2	0.2	0.19	0.19	800,000
SHARES					
Interpact Res. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	25,000,000
Interpact Res. A	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	11,000,000
D. & P. Res. A	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	30,000,000
D. & P. Res. B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	280,000
Perpetual Res. Corp.	2.3	2.34	2.3	2.34	37,000
Sm. Res. Corp.	0.045	0.053	0.045	0.048	48,000,000
Vulcan Indus.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	520,000
BANK & FIN SEC					
Bank & Fin Sec	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	83,856,750.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	238.27	239	238.27	239	340,251,251.00
INDEX	32,358.03	32,358.03	32,358.03	32,358.03	1,694,360.00
Mining	997,632.100	997,632.100	997,632.100	997,632.100	72,669,307.00
OIL	1,572,000	1,572,000	1,572,000	1,572,000	3,437,236.00
GRAND TOTALS	1,386.80	1,386.80	1,386.80	1,386.80	8,628,791,495.00
AVERAGES					
Bank & Fin Sec	5.78	5.78	5.78	5.78	UP 12
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,360.5	2,360.5	2,360.5	2,360.5	UP 9.21
PRO	680.10	680.10	680.10	680.10	UP 3.27
Mining	2,953.77	2,953.77	2,953.77	2,953.77	DOWN 4.16
OIL	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	UP 0.01
SALE	130.00	130.00	130.00	130.00	JNCK 0.00
At Shares Index	1,550.20	1,550.20	1,550.20	1,550.20	UP 3.54
Composite	1,807.48	1,807.48	1,807.48	1,807.48	UP 17.75
NO. OF ADVANCES: 46, NO. OF DECLINES: 24, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 41, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 111, NO. OF TRADES: 2,790					

For CAP, things are looking up

THINGS may be looking up for the pre-need industry leader College Assurance Plan (CAP).

During a congressional hearing, several legislators were able to grasp the bigger picture that pre-need companies such as CAP offered valuable and essential services that the state was in no position to provide.

The CAP and the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) had been invited to present their respective positions before the House committee on banks and financial intermediaries chaired by Rep. Jaime Lopez.

The session was called to investigate the problems of CAP. During the hearing, Rep. Jacinto Paras asked Rep. Barin, SEC chair, why the regulatory body refused to renew CAP's license to sell new plans, seriously stifling the pre-need firm's cash flow, and upsetting the company's operations in recent days.

"Your mandate," Paras told Barin, "is to regulate and not kill

Kiss sorrow goodbye

By Marge C. Enriquez

"DON'T GIVE sorrow; don't take sorrow!"

This is a profound twist to the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.") The consequences of being affected by circumstances or by people's misbehavior could be more severe than those of willfully hurting others. Our speech and actions can offend people without our meaning to, but if we are constantly alert, we can take responsibility and change.

On the other hand, to be on the receiving end makes us more vulnerable. By interpreting the other party's deeds, building a case against them and reliving the hurt, we wallow in sorrow. This drains us of energy and logic and renders us powerless.

Then it takes time for us to be stable again. Rejecting sorrow frees us from being fragile or too sensitive and helps us bury the hatchet so we can start with a clean slate all over again.

This is one of the lessons I learned from an old friend, Karen Coyore, who teaches Raja Yoga meditation in the United States, and who also writes. When I was a graduate student in California, Karen, a holistic health practitioner and nutritionist, introduced me to a vegetarian diet. However, Karen prefers to nourish the soul with gems of wisdom. She once shared her insights on how to not be affected by people or situations in an essay titled, "Don't Take Sorrow."

In fact, put a stop to all negative feelings by developing a solid sense of your own worth

Important distinction

Making a very important distinction, she explained that pain is a symptom of something that needs healing, and sorrow is an emotional reaction to pain. Sorrow can be caused by loss of face, falling out with a business partner, mistrust after being deceived, a bruised ego, or self-righteous indignation when one is insulted, or the rancor that results from being manipulated.

The root cause of this is a weak spot in one's character, which isn't always easy to admit. Karen said she herself inherited an obscure self-image and tended to be unforgiving of her own flaws.

The worst manifestation of her insecurity was being an easy target for criticism and condemnation.

"Whenever something was done to me from which I took sorrow, I added that to my inner landscape of low self-esteem, for I believed that sorrow was my lot," Karen explained. Yet deeper inside, she adamantly protested that she didn't deserve it.

Although she followed the biblical precept, "As you sow, so shall you reap," she desisted from deliberately offending anyone. However, she silently blamed and cursed the people she thought responsible and wished something awful would happen to them.

"I know that I'm not the only one who does that. How often we [zip up] our lips and yet denounce oth-

ers in our minds. We accuse and blame through our thoughts while feigning a smile. Or, we write the other person off in our book and gradually pull away from (his or her) company," said Karen. The result is passing judgement unto the person—which is an egoistic and higher-than-thou attitude.

Meanwhile we deny that anything is wrong with us. Karen added, "When even our close relationships aren't working very well, we never consider that our own mental attitude [may have something] to do with it."

Wising up

Karen said she wised up when she read Gary Zukov's groundbreaking book, "The Seat of the Soul," which explains the Golden Rule. In essence, Zukov explains that even the patterns of our thinking and feelings are subtle actions and reactions—and we should also be held responsible for those. That's why we must be careful of our intentions.

Realizing that no one is exempted from this rule, Karen stopped being judgmental, and taught herself not to harbor ill feelings, even for people who have been, to say the least, nasty to her.

"However, I maintain this caution, not out of fear of what others might do to me, but of what I am doing to myself," she noted. Karen discovered that healing occurred only after she developed her strong sense of worth or value as a human being.

She also addressed the common question: "Doesn't the one who hurt me have any responsibility? Do I have to become a martyr? Where's the justice in all this?"

By the inescapable law of cause and effect, people who hurt us are going to receive the fruit of that from someone or somewhere. However, Karen warned, keeping in mind that others should get their retribution is futile. In fact, the ill feelings that we wish on them are going to come back, like a tennis ball, to our court.

Jesus Christ heroically forgave the souls who abused and crucified Him because He knew that people gave sorrow due to their own pain or unfulfilled needs. Karen said we should imbibe that same compassion for people who hurt us: "Let me instead think, 'May they never have to suffer what I am going through right now.'"

Karen advised: "When someone inadvertently does something and you build a case against him or her, don't be the self-appointed judge and jury as well. Learn to see and experience without responding negatively. Never keep remembering the sorrow that occurred in the past. Nurture yourself with positive thoughts and engage in selfless actions."

Not always easy

As the cliché goes, it's easier said than done, especially for people who's made it a habit to wallow in

grief or self-pity, or have extreme attachment to past disasters.

"Sensitivity, which reflects an irritable or an easily offended temperament, is rooted in dissatisfaction with the self, in low self-esteem," Karen added. "This sensitivity convinces me that I am a victim, which renders me powerless. Develop a kind and compassionate relationship with yourself, a solid sense of your own value."

At the same time, Karen insisted that one should step on the brakes of unhappy feelings. Instead of dwelling on the pain, she said, affirm a hundred times a day: "I love and value myself."

Look at the past experience objectively as a "gift" with a hidden meaning or, as another author, Mike George, calls it, "an unfolding of our personal heritage."

It is beneficial to view the experiences of 2004 as a knowledge resource, which we can use in 2005 to bring us closer to our dreams.

That inner wellspring

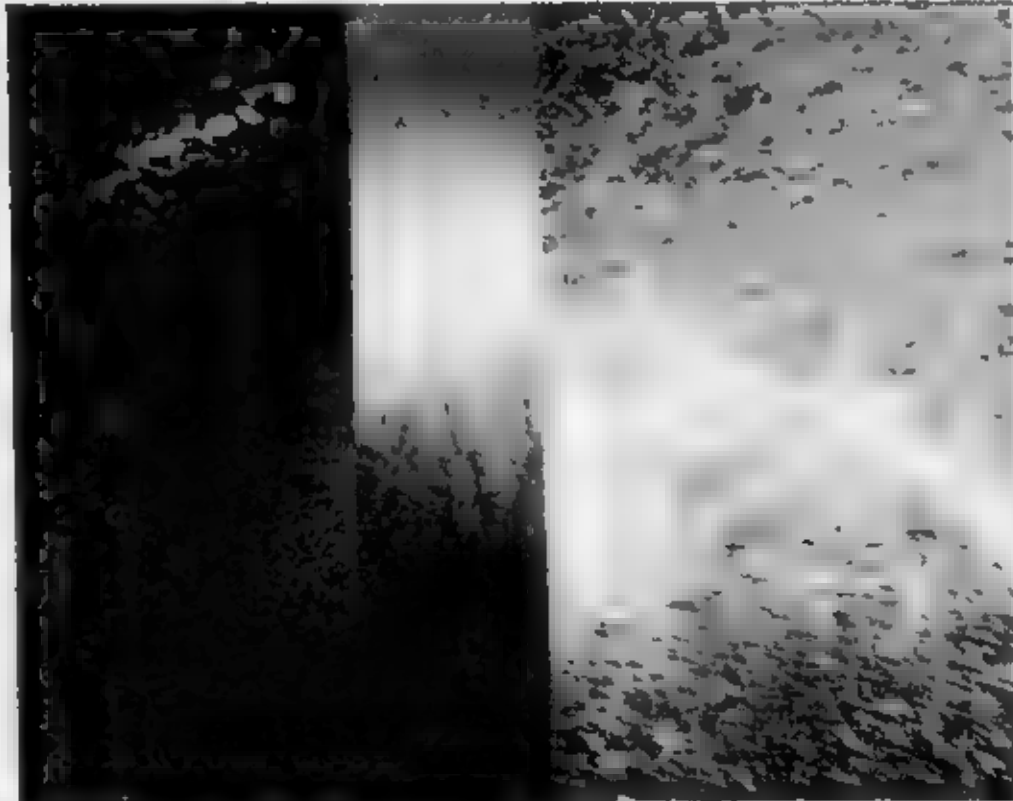
At this writing, I have just come from an atmosphere of fear and commotion. On the way to work, I came upon a car accident on Bagtikan Street in Makati. I saw a lifeless child being carried into a cab while other pedestrians helped another child, who was also presumed dead. A man covered in his own blood got out of another cab. There was wailing and crying as witnesses gave sketchy descriptions of the incident.

As the year ended, untimely deaths came through natural calamities, disease, fires, heinous crimes and accidents. Relatives could not understand why the victims, despite the good deeds they had done, should die so tragically.

In his book, "Discover Inner Peace," Mike George explains how chance can give the illusion of upsetting our dreams or pathways. When such events arise, he says, our capacity to maintain equanimity independently of the fluctuations of life's chance situations can be drastically tested. People don't understand that life is a mesh of cause and effect. Luck and tragedy may seem accidental, but they are actually requisites. Circumstances make us realize the differences between body and spirit. The series of grievous events are not part of a lottery but a system resulting from past actions working in an intricate web which our life unrolls.

For so long, society has indulged in the superficialities of the present, without thinking of future outcomes. Our spirits create events and should take responsibility for them. This is why there is no such thing as a fluke, or chance, or accidents. George says whatever is happening is simply the result of one's previous action from a long-forgotten past.

Life is both predestined and operated by free will. If we do good with honesty and purity of intention, we need not be trapped in the web of cause and effect and become a victim. And for those who have done good, yet seem to have suffered a reversal of fortune, what matters is how much virtue one has acquired in times of crises. Inner wellspring is our insurance from sorrow.



"NIGHTSONGS," Jaime Zobel 2004

Zobel's 'Journey' fetches bliss

This exhibit of photographs exudes an aerial lull, a serenity, and peace beyond understanding

By Leovino Ma. Garcia
Contributor

JAIME ZOBEL's photographs in "The Journey of Light" fetch bliss and happiness for the viewer who takes time to "dwell" on them. "To dwell," of course, means here "to recollect oneself" in order to become hospitable, permeable to the essential.

The essential is light—a sort of kindness that surrounds and suffuses us, in which we bathe and emerge into being. With this emergence into light, there gradually grows a sense of well-being. One can almost hear Julian of Norwich's reassuring line: "All shall be well and all shall be well." Indeed!

Aerial lull

Zobel's photographs exude an aerial lull, a serenity, and peace beyond understanding such as "Shadow Play I & II" and "Evening Dance I & II." It is a peace that comes from the coupling of head and heart. And yet, this silence is also palpable, as palpable as the sparks of light or sprays of water that seem to fly off from his art works, especially "Night-songs."

One cannot help but imagine Zobel, developing his photographs in the pitch darkness of a room. The surprise may be that he creates his works, with a computer as accomplice, in a room that is airy and filled with graceful light. After all, as "photographer," he is a drawer, recorder, and writer of light. The Greek term

"graphikos" refers to a "maker of pictures." This is a term etymologically linked to words ending in a form of "grapho" like geography, calligraphy and, obviously, photography. The common meaning of the suffix "grapho" is not only "to draw" but "record and write." Zobel faithfully draws, records, and writes the itinerary of light in "The Crossing 2."

How does he do this? What role does the computer play in this creative process? It is best to listen to Zobel himself.

"I compose all my works by myself, using principally my own photographs. I cut, mix and arrange pieces of these photographs in a rather painstaking process until I end up with a composition that pleases me. The collage form composition is done by me, entirely by hand in a manageable-sized hard board. From there, it goes to the computer that simply cleans up my work for slight imperfections, mainly to ensure that the horizontal and vertical lines are straight. I then make a transparency and a CD-ROM that professional printers need to finally print on watercolor paper using the iris or giclee process, or simply on photographic paper."

Great photograph

For Zobel, the computer is an excellent tool, "an enabler" that allows him to work more efficiently and

come up with excellent results. Nevertheless, the computer remains only a tool. It yearns for the intelligence, feeling, and affection of the artist.

Although there is a sense in which photographs capture reality, we are reminded by Susan Sontag in her illuminating study, "On Photography," that they are also "as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are." Jaime Zobel is not a "taker" but a "maker" of pictures. His photographs excite us because they disclose reality in a new way. Zobel shows us reality in a different light, as it is uniquely experienced by him.

Photography, for Zobel, is a blessed occasion for self-expression, maybe even superior to painting. According to Ansel Adams, "a great photograph" has to be "a full expression of what one feels about what is being photographed in the deepest sense." It is, thereby, "a true expression of what one feels about life in its entirety." One can only be delighted that Jaime Zobel possesses the luxury of pursuing his passion—to express what he feels about life in its entirety in every single photograph he makes or creates.

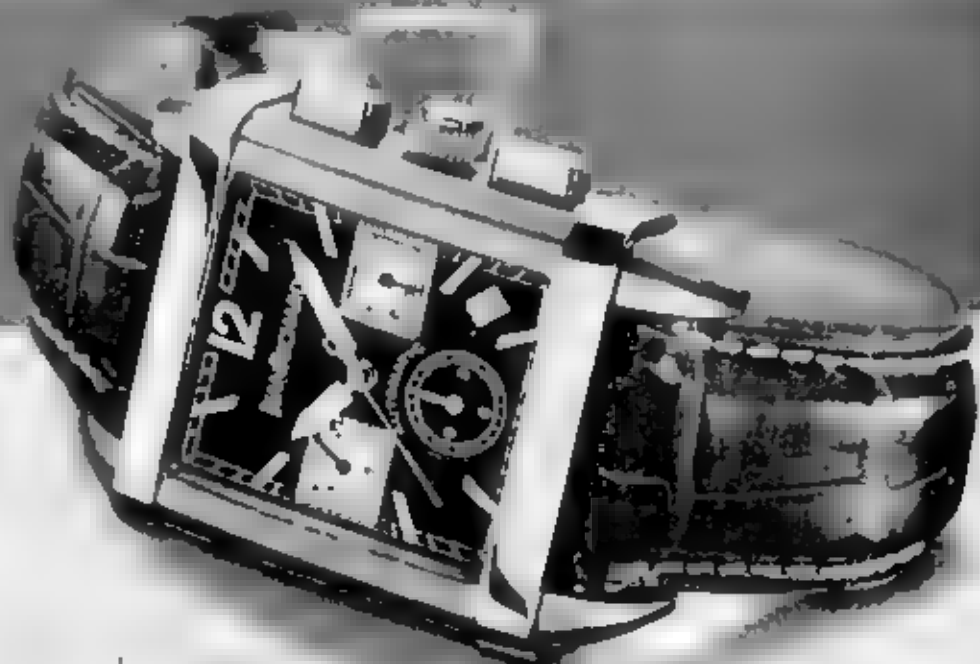
"The Journey of Light" is on view at the Budji show-room at 233 Nicanor Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati City.

For comments, email the author at lgarcia@ate-nea.edu.

JEANRICHARD

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TALI BEACH. Only when we relax with the elements do we regain our more fluid state.

Tali Vibe

By Josemari Ugarte
Contributor

THEY say you've never really lived unless you've lived through a drunken New Year's celebration on the shores of Boracay. But Tali Beach in Batangas has its own signature holiday-making, highlighted by the traditional week-long donkey dance that the locals put together from December 26 to January 2, or thereabouts.

Most of Makati will be in Boracay this yearend, I suspect, because the island becomes a Mecca for city slickers who flock to the island like parrots to party with the locals and get banged, drunk and tanned. Tali, on the other hand, is an exclusive seaside community run by the same families who have been there for generations, and recent migrants who have discovered its tranquil beauty and built their own dream homes along the golden roads. It can get just as wild as Boracay, but not in a general madness, albeit commercial, that permeates throughout the island. In Tali, parties are scattered in several homes that have been notorious for throwing dangerously decadent beachfront bashes.

Tropical fantasy

Driving through the pebbled roads of Tali—Seaside Drive, Cliff Road, Sunset Drive—is a tropical fantasy tour in itself. On one side, there are the vast blue ocean and ripe sunset on the

horizon; on the other, there's the most charmingly diverse neighborhood of beachfront homes you will ever encounter. They are beach houses in every shape, size and style; inspired by everything from the Mediterranean to Miami Beach. The older houses, owned by the first settlers on this golden green cove in Nasugbu, were simple two-story Filipino homes made of wood, nipa, cogon and capiz. Inspired by the *bahay kubo* and built as open as possible but designed to withstand typhoons. They're all still there, and it is a weird fascination to see them stand next to more modern seafloor villas.

During the Christmas holidays, all these exotic beach houses come alive with the sounds of laughter and music and the smoky smell of barbecue pits wafting through the air. Psychedelic beach towels are draped over the balconies and kids in shorts, shades and tank-tops stroll down the roads to the various beaches or cliffs. Rumbling down the roads are 4x4s shuttling residents back and forth: on a quick trip to the bay to pick up more beer, on a drive to neighboring Punta Fuego to socialize with the "blue bloods," or just cruising around the village looking for action. Speedboats and jet-skis are being towed to the marina and off-road motorcycles are rolling around in dust trails.

Although New Year's Eve is always a long night,

serious partying in Tali takes place a few nights before, during the Annual Concert Festival, where visitors come by land, sea and air to get drunk and dance the night away in a frenzy of island music in Tali's Main Beach. On that night, the long stone steps that lead down to the beach are lit up with lanterns. Giggling shadows tipsy from after-shower cocktails on balconies or patios or long, breezy verandas walk down the steps and spill into the bubbling cauldron of a crowd that is slowly building up around a stage that faces the dark ocean, dressed up like a Mexican *piñata*.

Say 'hello'

Everybody knows everybody in Tali, so when you walk down those steps and hit the sand, the first thing you do is say, "Hello." It is a deluge of familiar sun-tanned faces, some already drunk and squeezing you with affection. There is a fashion show of the latest and most creative beach wear designs. There is a bar, of course, and drinkers pile through it, buying plastic cups of rum and ice to lug back to their own spots on the beach. There are food stalls selling barbecue and pizza. You can get stoned on the music till your head starts spinning.

The luau-like atmosphere usually gets crazy after midnight. Local reggae band Tropical Depression headlines the show—but by the time a good amount of alcohol has been consumed, the stage becomes open-mike night. Many celebrities, VIPs, politicians, businessmen and other members of Manila's Elite shed their barongs and cocktail dresses for sarongs and sun dresses, and mingle freely among the youth—which is a rapidly growing demographic in Tali. During this week there are young people everywhere: jet-skiing, boating, scuba-diving, hanging out at the beach, playing volleyball with formidable teams from Maya-Maya and Punta Fuego. It's the same lifestyle as Boracay but with considerably less people. Less corporate-sponsored events, and much more privacy and exclusivity. Partly the reason for this is that there are no hotels in Tali, only private homes, and this limits the number of people that go there. It is still a private community, but a rapidly growing one: so many houses have gone up in the last decade and the community has grown bigger and closer to each other. Of course, Tali is not nearly as picturesque as Boracay, but then again it's only a couple of hours away from Manila by car.

The concert is usually held on December 30th, which gives everybody one full day to recover and regenerate for the New Year's Eve party. But by this time, most of the people that turned up for the concert are now driving back to Manila. New Year's Eve parties in Tali take place in different houses, all competing for the best view of the spectacular fireworks display along the

bay. The beachfront homes set up arsenals on their cliff gardens and private beaches, then set them off as the year comes to an end, culminating in a massive surge of firepower that lights up the night sky like a roman candle and sends streams of multi-colored lights into the black ocean, showering over the yachts anchored there. This is the pure beauty of this festive night on the beach: with the ocean as canvas, the fireworks become more vivid and alive and symbolic of celebration and fun... and the air is never heavy with smog.

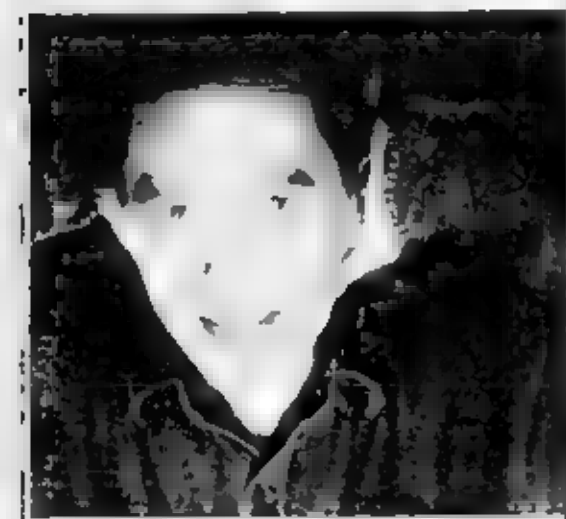
New Year's Eve

On the afternoon of the 31st, much of the community—which includes Europeans, Chinese and many, many *mestizos*—along with a few agnostic stragglers, congregate on the rolling garden of the Ayuyao House for a beautiful sunset Mass. The property is on the western side of the cove, around the cliffs of the massive South Beach-inspired Villalaza House; where sunsets are nothing less than sacred visions, and even more so when they become the backdrop of the final consecration of the

year. It's hard to avoid being overwrought in prose when the place you are writing about is a poem itself—or at least a postcard from a precious past. I consider myself a lame Catholic, but there is something undeniably spiritual about sitting on the soft grass with a breeze blowing in your face and listening to a simple but poignant parable about new beginnings, as the sun sets between two small islands in the silver distance, and the tide rolls slowly back into the sea.

After Mass, the multitudes run back to their homes to start drinking. The objective is to get a powerful year-end booze buzz going by the time midnight rolls along, because once those daddy rockets start blowing up the night sky, the parties accelerate in speed and energy. Almost all conversations are bent one way or the other by this time, and people are laughing and crying the year away, sucking on *torotot* and shoving *watusi* sticks into their cigarettes. I remember one New Year's Eve party when my friend's dad threw a *tri-angulo* into the wind, and it flew right back. He was rushed to a clinic in the bayan, but he lost an eye. Still the party went on till morning and everybody got blabbering drunk on Blowjobs (an alcoholic concoction).

It is a tradition for many to watch the sunrise. If you can still see at this point, you may actually enjoy it. Many have passed out, and when they wake up, their brains will feel sunburned, too. Hangovers are easier to cure on the beach, though, and with a fresh Bloody Mary and a few laps in the pool, life starts to look pretty good again.



MORE than a top hair-dresser, Teng Roma is a savvy businessman.

A pit stop for pampering

Service is the Emphasis in multi-awarded salon

By Harriet Ann Dy
Contributor

REALTOR/housewife Winda Bautista still remembers the time top stylist and businessman Vicente "Teng" Roma would cut her hair in a bathroom.

"When Emphasis salon was still under construction, he worked temporarily out of one of the Rockwell condo model units," she recalls. "I remember getting my hair trimmed in a bathroom because there was a bathtub."

And while Emphasis is undergoing renovations these days—the shift from Asian/Balinese interiors to a Moroccan-inspired one was palpable when ELAN dropped by—Bautista now has her hair done regularly in a more placid environment.

Client loyalty

Client loyalty is just one of many reasons that Emphasis has survived, no, thrived, in what has become a hot franchise these days: the business of beauty and wellness.

In the last four years, the boutique salon has been a pampering pit stop for socialites and salaried office girls. The latter, according to Teng, save precious money to get at least an hour of escape from their daily grind.

"Teng really knows how to 'read' his customers," says Bautista of her twice-weekly visits. "I've been going to him since his BCBG days. 'I was very satisfied with what he did to my hair then; and I still get a lot of compliment when he does my hair today.'"

A confidant to his clients and, to this 64-member staff part-beauty guru, part-social director and largely a well-loved big boss, the soft-spoken stylist has thus reigned over the calming oasis this side of Manila.

"This is my home; this is where I entertain friends," he says of the salon. And like a good host, he has run this vanity paradise with a killer mix of

talent, propriety, democracy, and excellence in service.

All of which are served with his own eponymous iced coffee and iced tea concoctions to guest/clients.

An advertising executive by training, Teng began his career at the old Rever salon. He became one of the pioneering partners of the former BCBG salon at 6750 before moving on to become managing partner at Emphasis.

Success formula

His formula for success is simple: technical excellence tempered with Asian hospitality. For Teng, who cuts an average of 30 heads a day 24/7—unless he's on his annual holiday—consistency, combined with professionalism, is what fuels loyalty among clients and, therefore, long-term business.

"For me, success is measured in how you serve your clients—whether they drive up in a Jaguar or take the bus," he says. "We're not elitist at all; there's no class distinction here."

Although he is known as the magic hands behind many of Manila's so-called "crowned heads," going the extra mile is almost instinctive, whether the client is paparazzi fodder or *hoi polloi*.

"I remember one time I wasn't comfortable with what a stylist was doing to my hair," recalls Bautista. "Teng was walking by and I called him. He immediately re-assigned me to Black, who is now my colorist, and asked Danny Karalbas to give me a makeover besides. I really appreciated that."

The numbers speak for themselves: an average of 20 percent growth, year over year, daily appointments booked as early as eight in the morning, and zero percent staff turnover. "We've never had to fire anyone," says Teng. "Some have left yes, but mostly for greener pastures abroad."

Staff perks include a generous pay scheme, trips and trainings here and abroad, plus access to technology transfer from Teng and other senior stylists like Victor Ortega and Danny—no surprise that the salon has also become a fertile breeding ground of in-house talent: Lourdy Ryan Ramos, who started as a shampoo person and all-around salon assistant, was part of the Emphasis team that clinched the 2002 Schwarzkopf Salon Group Championships. Other members of the winning team were Danny, Glenn Roxas and Joseph Claravall.

In the same year, Danny also became the Dioré Color Trophy champion and Schwarzkopf Color champion, Avant Garde category. In 2003, Emphasis was named Best Salon by Philippine Tatler magazine.

Meanwhile, Geoff Moran, who started as a receptionist, is now a familiar byline in fashion magazines like Metro Society and Philippine Tatler.

"We have no lean season here," says Marge Olives, salon manager. "There are more opportunities for growth, but we just don't have the space."

And although Teng had been adamant against opening branches "because it might affect quality in service," in 2002, Emphasis decided to take on the former Rodger Craig salon at the Peninsula and opened Emphasis at the Pen. The largely male-themed place is headed by Mang Ronnie Curacho, christened "barber to the ambassadors."

Not one to be threatened by competition, Teng says other salons have in fact sent their stylists to train with Emphasis as well. "I firmly believe that knowledge is best when shared. If you're good, you're good."

A sweet new touch

By Meluchi Rivera
Contributor

... to this quiet neighborhood in Quezon City is a bakery-café called Wheatberry

A CLEAN, well-lighted place, the way Hemingway put it, is what comes to mind upon seeing Wheatberry, a welcome addition to the neighborhood of Scout Tuzon in Quezon City. The bakery-café with the sweet-sounding name has got residents of the area abuzz since it opened last month.

Whether it is because of the cheery red-and-brown façade, the bright, spacious interiors, or the bread and pastry counters displaying pastry chef Mary Sonia Inducil's creations, Wheatberry manages to attract a steady flow of customers even with no marketing plan.

For the moment, people walk in to try the cakes and pastries, actually Inducil's unique take on the classics. The best-selling chocolate caramel cake has been given a sprinkling of sesame seeds to lend it a nutty flavor, while the choco Bailey and double chocolate cream puffs have Bavarian cream fillings that make them taste lighter than the ordinary cream puffs one finds elsewhere.

Superior version

Another notable confection is the Tutti Frutti chiller cake that arose from Inducil's efforts to make a superior version of that much-loved trifle, the *crema de fruta*. It has assorted fresh fruits atop a vanilla sponge cake with layers of fruit-flavored Bavarian cream and white chocolate ganache.

Wheatberry also offers marbled butter cake, pumpkin walnut cake, two kinds of mousse cakes, mango and strawberry-topped sponge cakes, caramel cheesecake and cookies and a selection of breads, salads, sandwiches, pizza, pasta and entrees.

The word Wheatberry is not about a kind of berry but is the name for a whole kernel of wheat,

Inducil explains. The name reveals her own partiality to bread, and she takes great pride in the store's baguettes, brioches, rolls, large putok pan de sal, among others.

Inducil encouraged this writer to try the pizza and sandwiches, saying it was the best way to appreciate Wheatberry's thin, crisp pizza crust (not for sale, though) and the different breads. True enough, the 13-inch *adobo* pizza is a winner, in part because of its generous topping of pork, tomatoes, red onions and mango. An order costs a reasonable P248 and can feed from two to three persons.

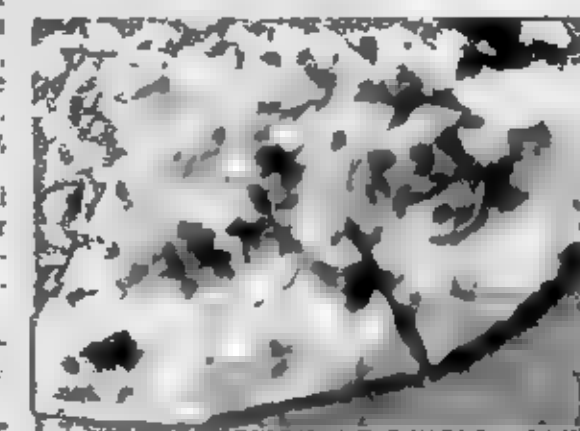
No preservatives

The turkey sandwich (P175) is also worth a return visit. It comes served on slices of focaccia bread with cheese, lettuce, and alfalfa sprouts, plus a side order of fried potatoes with honey mustard dressing. The focaccia bread is oily in a good way, dripping with the olive oil that greases the pans they are baked in.

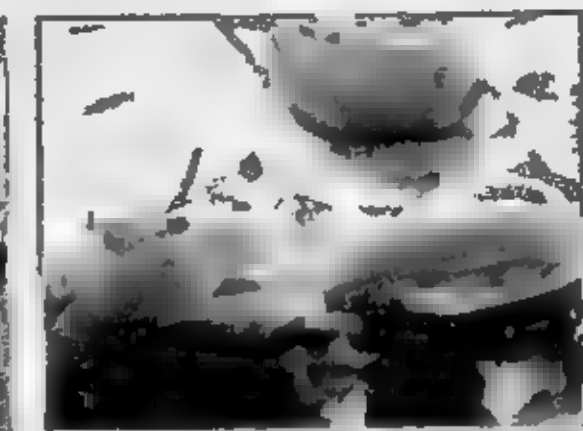
A visit is not complete without sampling a cream puff or two. The two varieties have been pleasing customers with their rich but not cloyingly sweet filling. I prefer the double chocolate, although Inducil says they sell more of the Baileys variety.

She stresses that the store's cakes and pastries do not have preservatives or artificial flavors and colorings. Breads are baked fresh daily. The surfeit is marked down to 50 percent at 9 p.m.

Wheatberry is at 84 Scout Castor and Scout Tuzon Sts., Quezon City, tel. no. 374-8470.



ADORO pizza



TURKEY sandwich



VARIETY of pastries

ELAN

Venus rocks in 2005

By Georgina C. Solina
Contributor

FUNDITIS SAY 2005 is the year we'll all be talking about half a decade from now.

People will realize that only by broadening the intellect within the context of love can intuition be awakened, and social ills healed.

With "integration" as the buzzword, next year will mark the transition wherein the left-brained (masculine and logical) activities will synchronize with the right-brained (feminine and sentient) functions. There will be a strong trend towards spirituality.

The fusion of logic and intuition will produce ideas that will provide people with a higher grasping of truth, further social solidarity, and uplift humanity to a greater measure of enlightenment.

Through the years, I have been studying astrological transits or the passage of planetary energies and how they affect different aspects of our lives. In 2005, Venus will have a profound influence on events because the bombardment of its energies on a monthly basis will be unprecedented. What does an almost daily dose of Venus mean?

Venus is celebrated as the energy of love, truth, beauty, and harmony. Her sisters in other cultures share the same aspects of fertility, food, serpents, rainbows, nurturing, birth, death, rebirth and transformation.

Under her influence, there will be the balance in the science and art of relationships, beginning with ourselves, by integrating all the various facets of our personality and letting them be ruled by the hero or heroine within us. This will expand our sense of relationships with our family, community, other nations and the environment. Knowing our interconnectedness with spirit, matter, and the world enables us to relate things in new ways and debunk long-held beliefs.

Rare spectacle

Last June 8, 2004, Venus used the power of the Sun to beam her energy down upon Earth. In a passage lasting six hours, we were united to witness this rare planetary spectacle.

The highlight of this event showed Venus as a drop on the edge of the Sun. Is this her cleansing tear? Christian visionaries have seen apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary as shedding the same cleansing tears. Does this mean the escalation of the cleansing process as the world intensifies in materialism and superficiality? (We have until June 6, 2012, or eight years, to assimilate it all.)

In the past months, the country has experienced a slew of cleansing experiences, wrought partly by Venus and man's undoing. Venus is beautiful and powerful though sometimes she can be fierce like Typhoons Onding, Violeta, and Winnie, which caused the catastrophic landslides, washing away villages down below the Sierra Madre ranges of Infanta, Real, Quezon, and Davao. Aurora. She can be fierce only when she needs to protect the interest of mankind and to bring about eventual harmony.

Right after the onslaught, the country united as Filipinos responded swiftly with rescue armies bringing bulldozers, picks, shovels for digging out those trapped in the mud, aside from bringing relief goods, such as food, water, medicines, blankets. Filipinos were driven to help their hapless fellowmen following the realization of the tremendous scale of Mother Earth's backlash on man's destruction of the environment.

In Venus itself stands a volcano named Mont Mons named after the ancient Egyptian Goddess of Truth and Justice.

Looking back at the previous Venus Passages over the cen-

turies—the dates being 1518, 1526, 1631, 1761, 1769, 1874, 1882, 2004, 2012—there was a thread of communication leading to today's globalization. It will take another article to show how these Venus double transits influenced the great writings of men that led to the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, and eventually to American democracy, which upheld the ideals of liberty and civil rights.

This is of great importance to the Goddess, the equality of men and women. The wars in the Middle East can shed more light on this subject, considering the plight of the women there.

Golden Age

The Venusian transits will cause a planetary awakening in 2005. Such an influence will realign the most progressive of thinkers into a force that will incite the political systems of the world to re-examine their conscience. People will see through

lies and deceit so fast, that the "old boy network" will start to erode. The stage is set for those with the noblest intent to bring a new kind of leadership to focus.

A new wave of intellectuals will cry, "I am just plain tired of the secrets, lies and spins that have been fed for so long."

Many democratic nations will reread their Constitutions with a new enthusiasm. They will open their eyes to see how many of their basic human rights have been eroded, rousing them to be fearless in correcting mistakes.

Mother Earth as represented by the Goddess Venus will be vindicated at last, her laws of Truth and Justice clarified. It will be first understood by smaller groups that work for change, and this understanding will ripple into a movement of enlightenment that will sweep the world. These groups will attract people of altruism into active service. They will also teach people how to sacrifice their petulant individual concerns in the light of a greater shared goal.

With the powerful energies of Venus and Pluto, the planet of change, there will be more focus on cooperation, tolerance, and compassion as the basis of a group enterprise. In this milieu, each individual can succeed and be integrated into the group endeavor where the various different qualities of the group serve as a motivator for mutual inspiration and growth. This would also be one way of addressing violence and corruption in society, which are manifestations of hampered creative potential.

Symbolic

Since it is Christmas, it is also coincidental that Venus is represented by the five-pointed star, symbolic of the elements of matter and spirit. In Christianity, the Star announced the coming of a great spiritual revelation and the coming of a Master. The Star is also a symbol of the Supreme Being as a point of light, radiating peace and love.

The Vedic tradition in India also sees the Venus double transit of June 8, 2004 as the turning point which will announce the start of the Golden Age coming to fruition in the next Venus transit on June 6, 2012.

With a barrage of Venus energies in 2005, the religions of the world will be in for a bit of an upset. In the early part of the year, people will renew their search for the Creator. Community churches will sprout like wildflowers, ministering to the needs of people. Those who have been in denial will finally move towards forgetting the dogma of a vengeful God. They will recognize God as Light, the Source of spiritual knowledge. His love will inspire them to transform.

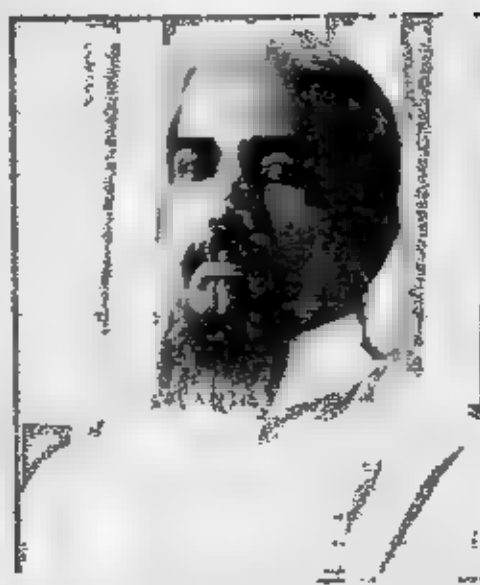
For feedback, write to: solina@mindgate.net.



RASHMI'S prayer: "If this person is healed through my hands, let it happen."



RASHMI Singh. "We can't change your life, but we will guide you, should you decide to make important changes."



RASHMI'S husband naturopath, Dr. Ravi Singh. He also believes he is just the means for healing to take place.



TURKISH bath opens pores and detoxifies while the head is kept cool.



THE DANCE of water in the fountain is an imagery for the happy state of being.



NAMASTE chair, made from fiberglass and copperleaf, respectfully welcomes those who sit in it.

By Angela
Blardony Ureta
Contributor
Photos by Jay Javier

Cleansing toward a calm new year

WE LIVE in a country that is considered second most polluted in the world in terms of air quality. This means we ingest toxins with every single breath we take. And if we add the impurities found in our "potable" water, the pesticides present in our "fresh" fruits and vegetables, plus the antibiotics and growth boosters forced into animals bred as meat, the very food we consume become the very sources of our illness.

Small wonder then, that all sorts of new viral strains and attacks on our immune system have given rise to diseases that were non-existent in previous generations, not to mention the emergence of stress-related conditions that have become commonplace in this 24/7 lifestyle. Despite the advances in science and medicine, we exist in a physical environment that hastens mortality and we wonder does healthful living stand a fighting chance?

Commitment

"Yes, but you have to be committed to making responsible lifestyle changes," says Dr. Rashmi Tolentino Singh, a naturopathic physician, yoga teacher and healer who, together with her husband, Ravi, have been helping individuals find their way to healthful living through their wholistic wellness center, Ra Kendra.

According to Dr. Singh, Ra Kendra (Sanskrit for "center of light") is dedicated to manifesting a vision of the world in which all beings "live together in the spirit of goodwill and harmony as they joyfully and creatively unfold their wholeness."

Both doctors were trained in naturopathy, Ayurveda, Chinese and Thai traditional massage, and other practices of Ancient Wisdom Teaching. They established Ra Kendra as a center for learning and fellowship in Jaipur, India, in 1975, before moving to Munich, Germany three years later. In 1981, the couple decided to return to the Philippines, where the center has been based since.

"It was not easy to establish Ra Kendra in Manila at a time when most Filipinos still thought of yoga as some sort of cult practice," says Rashmi, smiling amusedly at the recollection. There they were—hippies from the '70s teaching about love and beauty to the emerging yuppie generation of the '80s who walked the

edge of cutthroat ambition and material success. But if there was something that remained universal and unchanging, whatever the prevailing lifestyle trend, it was the presence of pain and the desire to eliminate it.

"Pain is always present whether in the physical, mental or spiritual form," she explains, "and people who are in pain are willing to do anything and everything to alleviate it—including making important changes in their life."

Willingness to change

Change is an important keyword for anyone who intends to find comfort in Ra Kendra's wellness programs. All clients have to begin with a cleansing program that heals and rejuvenates, because Rashmi maintains that there can be no healing without first detoxifying.

"The primary concern is to get rid of the toxins one has accumulated over the years and to bring his body to a state where it is strong enough to assimilate what is good in everything it consumes."

After the initial consultation and health reading, each patient is given his own nutritional and therapeutic program that will include lifestyle counseling, supervised fasts, hydrotherapy, earth packs and other naturopathic, yogic and Ayurvedic applications. It is in this intensive cleansing, healing and revitalizing program that discipline, commitment and personal responsibility are vital to achieving the goal of total health and well-being.

"The first question I always ask is: 'What do you think can I do for you?' We see where the patient is and where we can work together," says Rashmi. "We take every possible excuse of 'I can't' because entering our program demands knowing one's self and why he is doing this. We are very strict about personal commitment. You can't come here just when you feel like it then grumble if nothing is hap-

pening. You commit at least one month, coming here three times a week for a total of 12 sessions. It is also a proactive program where the patient has to do his share by taking care of his food, of his living habits. I can always tell if a patient is cheating on his program because the body cannot lie; it will always show."

Within a month, she says, a patient can already make up his mind on whether he really wants to change his life. "If not, then we don't have to waste each other's time."

From experience, many patients have no problem surviving the first 12 sessions, especially since they are closely supervised. It is sustaining that lifestyle change that is the bigger challenge. In which case, Rashmi advises patients to look deeply into their hearts and create a clear vision of how they really want their life to be. "The desire to change begins with what is in the heart. We can accommodate and guide them as far as they want to go, but they have to know why. Your nature cannot be destroyed. If you don't even see that, then you will be sick for a very long time!"

Kicking habits

The cleansing program (which costs around P15,000 for 12 sessions) is recommended once or twice a year, while patients with severe problems may be required to undergo a series of programs at a time. Ra Kendra has seen an endless procession enter its welcoming portals, people carrying bundles of physical and emotional ailments that run from tension headaches, insomnia and back pains, to cases of cancer, diabetes and other so-called "killer" diseases. Whatever the condition, Rashmi's immediate concern is to wean the patient away from his or her "toxic lifestyle."

"A lifestyle or certain living habits can cause one's system to generate and accumulate toxicity of varying degrees," she explains. "This could be due to mental, emotional and physical stress, unhealthy food intake, or

systemic wear and tear. A toxic situation undermines one's state of wellness due to the resulting energy blockages, clogged passages, malfunction of various organs, and so on. So the discomfort and imbalance one experiences are actually reminders to initiate some improvement and corrective measures in one's present lifestyle."

Aside from the intensive program, Ra Kendra offers other services that help detoxify, relax and rejuvenate mind and body using Ayurvedic applications. These include aromatic hot oil rubs, ozonized steam baths, herbal and floral baths, milk baths, Himalayan salt and ozonized oil baths, mineral packs, massages and polishes, as well as combination packages that can ensure days of sheer comfort and bliss after every session.

Body and soul

For those who want a more in-depth healing of mind, body and spirit, the center also offers various courses and activities that include yoga instruction, weekly collective meditation, naturopathic and yoga therapies, Reiki healing, counseling, as well as organized trips to spiritual and cultural centers in the Himalayas and other "power seats" all over the world.

One thing a patient has to understand, she says, is that the body should be seen as a gift and not a burden. "The body is the gross part of our being and the soul is the subtle aspect, but they are not separate—they are one. The body is our means of expressing ourselves in the world, the vehicle for creating. For as long as we are in the body, the better we maintain it, the more it becomes functional for us. We can use it to serve others and to serve our purpose in life. Let's stop making our body the whipping boy of our emotions."

And in over 30 years of healing as her life's work, Rashmi maintains that Ra Kendra promotes full cooperation of all systems and modalities. "Every method has its purpose and we are all working as one because we share the vision of improving the quality of life."

Ra Kendra is at the Deck (D2) of Medical Plaza Makati, Amorsolo corner Dela Rosa streets, Legaspi Village, Makati City. For inquiries, please call 843-6142, 824-1882 or 817-5484.

Relaxation...

... it can get stressful. Lavender or chamomile candles? A one and half-hour spa or a two-hour spa? The Natural Makiling Facial or the Natural Facial in Mt. Makiling? In the pursuit of peace and quiet, the pursuit can really get tiring. What to do? Here are some stress-free ways to relax.

Breathe deeply. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Hope that gave you a few moments of relaxation. You see, breathing deeply can be one of the fastest and easiest ways to relax. You can do it in the office. In the cab. Even while you're in a meeting.

Take a nap. In the office. In a cab. But not in a meeting please. A 5-minute nap can do wonders for your body and spirit.

Read something light. Read about some tropical paradise. Once your mind relaxes, the body is sure to follow.

Listen to music. Whether it's someone playing the flute or someone playing his heart out on an electric guitar, the more appealing the music is to you, the more it will release your tension from work.



figure 1 Inhale figure 2 Exhale

Now stretch. Get out of your chair and find some floor space. Touch your toes. Flex those calves. Make little circles with your arms. Since the muscles of the body are interconnected, stretching makes the whole body feel relaxed.

Drink something soothing. Water, even iced tea, provides that refreshing and soothing effect that goes deep down in the body.

Take a walk. Around the block. In the park. That fresh air can do you good. But if you're in the office and can't leave the building, walking around can provide that welcome break.

Take time out for personal reasons. Text a friend to say hi. Read an email from a loved one. Sketch an idea. Form something out of a cloud. This little distraction is the kind of break to relax the mind. You see, relaxing can be...relaxing. You can do these things wherever and whenever. And best of all, they're free.



Relaxing getaways...

Anywhere more than a hundred feet from your desk would be a good start. It could be a park. A quiet corner in a bookstore. And if by chance you have a jet at your disposal, people say Bora-Bora is nice this time of year.

But if all you've got are a few hundred bucks at your disposal, there are some gems in the metropolis worth visiting.

Let's start with the malls. Yup, you read it right. Malling for most people can be relaxing. The scent of freshly baked croissants, a leather goods store, can be as relaxing as a lit vanilla candle.

Visit art galleries. Landscapes remain to be a popular subject among artists. Look at the paintings. Appreciate its beauty. The serene lake. The calm skies. Your busy life should imitate art.

Drop by the old college open grounds. The cool breeze. The nostalgia. Plus the fact you no longer have to cram for an exam, can be quite relaxing.

Go to the movies. Ahhh... comfy seats. A constant 24 degrees. Just don't pick a movie about Japanese ghosts, World War II or Japanese ghosts in World War II. Sit back, relax and watch a no-brainer movie.

Surf the Internet. The world wide web is full of sites where you can give your weary mind that much needed break.

Spend an hour in a bookstore. Get a book or a magazine. Pick a quiet corner. Start reading. And since store clerks won't bother you while you're reading, you might actually get to finish that book you're reading. Besides, they're busy returning all those new magazines into their plastic covers.

Visit your garden. Whether it's a large yard or three potted plants that make up your garden, the green colors and the gentle leaves blowing in the wind provide that soothing effect. Plus plants give off that much needed oxygen your body needs.

Now let's try something closer. Like your bed. It's near. It's free. It's yours. It's open 24/7. And since it's December, your arms and feet will instinctively search for those cool spots on the bed. And once they find them, a good sleep is just a few winks away.

You could also try the kitchen. Make yourself a sandwich. Fix yourself a glass of iced tea. Simple things like these provide a pleasant distraction from take-home work or a household chore. The light meal, the cool drink is just what your body needs to calm down from all that work.

So there you go. Relaxing getaways can be near and inexpensive.

Peace on Earth & Sky



The soothing effect of tea.
The refreshing taste of lemon.
Sip in heavenly peace.

Earth & Sky Lemon Iced Tea
Refreshed & Calm

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Magazine

The Spoken World:
Laugh and cry at the
year's best quotes



World / A7

'Incivility'
named year's
top word

Sports / A23

A happy Christmas
for cancer-stricken
PBL player

Metro / A15

Alert bus driver
foils Christmas
eve bombing

Lifestyle / C1

How Christmas
cards revive
our forests



Poe's death, funeral break traffic records on INQ7.net

By Javier Vicente D. Rufino
INQ7.net

THE DEATH and funeral of celebrated movie actor and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. was a blockbuster event not only on the streets of Manila but also online as overseas Filipinos broke traffic records on INQ7.net.

POE'S A6

email: foodbuck@inquirer.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Sunday, December 26, 2004 ★ 64 pages / 10 sections / Vol. 19 / No. 18

P18



Pope: Troubled world needs message of Jesus

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II told the world in his Christmas message on Saturday that people were yearning for peace everywhere around the globe and expressed particular concern for Iraq, the Middle East and Africa.

"Everywhere peace is needed!" he said in an unusually short

"Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and World) message, which he read with difficulty from the steps of St. Peter's Basilica.

The Pope, who suffers from Parkinson's Disease and no longer walks, asked the Infant Jesus to encourage attempts to promote dialogue and reconciliation and to sustain peace efforts.

"I think of Africa, of the

tragedy of Darfur in Sudan, of the Ivory Coast and the Great Lakes Region. With great apprehension I follow the situation in Iraq. And how can I fail to look with anxious concern, but also invincible confidence, toward that Land of which you are a son?" he said.

Encouraged by chants of "John Paul II, We Love You," he continued with determination to read brief Christmas greetings in 62 languages, including Arabic, Hebrew and others spoken in some of the world's hot spots.

The "Urbi et Orbi" message was heard by thousands of people under umbrellas in a rainy St. Peter's Square and watched by tens

POPE A4



CHRIST CHILD. Residents of Barangay Ilog in Infanta, Quezon, have left everything behind, including the Santo Niño. Infanta was one of the worst hit by two deadly storms.

CPP 'hit list' denounced

N. Korea ready for market economy

By Ricardo S. Malay
Contributor

PYONGYANG—In a rare indication that it's ready to embrace capitalist reforms, North Korea has said "the world is a market economy" and acknowledged that the Stalinist country may adopt the economic shift by socialist countries in Asia and elsewhere to open their economies.

A top official told a visiting Filipino, who holds a key position in the United Nations Development Programme, that Pyongyang could not afford to be left behind as China, Russia and Vietnam race to compete in an increasingly globalized world. But he stressed that they have to proceed cautiously so long as the nuclear issue in the Korean peninsula remains unresolved.

Romeo Garcia, a veteran spe-

N. KOREA A4



CANDLES AND PRAYERS. President Macapagal-Arroyo leads survivors of the collapsed Repador building in lighting candles and saying prayers at the makeshift graves in Barangay Tignoan, Real, Quezon, on Saturday.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Akbayan leaders fear for their lives

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.
Senior Desk Editor

INDIVIDUALS and groups listed as "counterrevolutionaries" in a December issue of the official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines have denounced the roster as a "hit list."

"We're fair game," Walden Bello, a University of the Philippines professor who is on the CPP list, told INQUIRER editors. "We don't think this is an arbitrary listing."

In an open letter to CPP founder Jose Maria Sison on the 36th anniversary of the CPP today, Bello and Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales said "The party which you founded 36 years ago views them as ideological and political enemies—class enemies, as can be gleaned from their international links."

In its Dec. 7 issue, the Akbayan identified the "counterrevolutionaries" in a diagram of individuals and organizations and their links to so-called Trotskyites and social democrats abroad. The diagram was prepared by the CPP's International Department.

"Some personalities involved with some of these groups are already dead, like Popoy Lagman, Romulo Kintanar and Arturo Tabara Lagman, reportedly—and the latter two admittedly—in the hands of your armed wing, the New People's Army. Another person on the list, Ricardo

CPP A4

Reds eye Iraq-style weapons

BACOLOD CITY—Communist insurgents yesterday said they were studying how to use weapons similar to the Iraqi insurgents in their armed campaign to seize power.

In a statement issued in this

REDS EYE A4

Contraband items become gifts to victims

By Volt Contreras
and Juliet Labog-Javelhana

SEIZED contraband became gifts of cheer as the Department of Social Welfare and Development yesterday distributed to typhoon victims in Quezon "Christmas packs" containing, among others, brand-new clothes that had been intercepted from suspected smugglers.

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman said the Bureau of Customs provided the clothes that formed part of the special relief packages, which also included slippers, candies and typical *noche buena* fare like spaghetti, sauces, canned fruit cocktail and juices.

The BOC has committed up to "10,000 bales" of confiscated garments and blankets worth mil-

lions of pesos to the government's relief efforts per orders from President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to Social Welfare Undersecretary Celia Yangco.

About half of that volume has so far been turned over to the DSWD, Yangco said in an interview, adding "Transporting them is no joke because of the security involved. We know that [the consignees] are still out there and

would want to get their hands on the goods."

Soliman, along with the President, spent Christmas Day with the displaced families who also lost loved ones in the collapsed Repador building in Barangay Tignoan, a coastal village in Real, Quezon.

The President arrived by helicopter in Tignoan at around 3:30

CONTRABAND A2

A YEAR AFTER

Tragedy brings Punta folk even closer

By Leticia M. Subang
Contributor

(Second of two parts)

SAN FRANCISCO, Pananon Island, Southern Leyte—The pace of construction at the relocation site in Barangay Punta is understandably slow.

Those who survived the floods and landslides that killed more than 120 in Punta alone on Dec.

19 last year have to work under the government's "food-for-work" program. But they also have to make some money to send their children back to school and buy basic needs such as medicines.

The skilled carpenters who are leading the construction have to take time off to earn a living. It is the women and the youth who are in charge of transporting the filling materials, as well as the

water, sand and gravel needed in mixing the cement.

During rainy days, the mud makes work a lot more difficult. And a large portion of the relocation site is dark at night because it has yet to be connected to the local electric cooperative's distribution lines. (The few lights they have are just tapped from the houses near the site.)

But from the banter of the sur-

vivors, one can envision what the new village would eventually look like. Their spirit of unity is obvious in the way they proudly recall the times they won most of the contests—the cleanest, the greenest—in the 22 barangays in San Francisco.

Punta is a strip of land at the foot of a mountain along a coast lined by volcanic rocks.

TRAGEDY A4



Pinoy machos vain and 'sexy', says poll

Blanche S. Rivera

IT'S BEEN long suspected but now there's proof: Filipino men are so vain.

A survey conducted in six countries in Asia and the United States showed that Filipino men were twice more likely

PINOY A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA DALANG, FOR RESEARCH/12/26/04

Second FRONTPAGE

Text us your feedback: inquirer.news.name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Marikina	Cloudy with Rain
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Quezon	Cloudy with Rain
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	San Jose	Cloudy with Rain
Laguna	Partly Cloudy	San Carlos	Cloudy with Rain
Clark	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rain
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rain	General Santos	Cloudy with Rain
Alagang	Cloudy with Rain	General Santos	Cloudy with Rain
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	General Santos	Cloudy with Rain

Chavit bawls out Palace official

By Christian V. Esguerra

A FUMING Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson gave a top Malacañang official a dressing-down for allegedly arranging ousted President Joseph Estrada's trip to Hong Kong.

In a meeting in Malacañang early this week, Singson confronted Presidential Chief of Staff Norberto Gonzales in the presence of no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to a highly reliable source who witnessed the confrontation. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was also there.

Gonzales had allegedly arranged the meeting to appease the governor who had threatened to withdraw his support for Ms Arroyo if Estrada was allowed to leave.

The source said Singson questioned Gonzales for facilitating the issuance of a passport to Estrada who is scheduled to undergo a knee operation in Hong Kong.

Singson, whose exposé on illegal gambling led to Estrada's downfall in 2001, also disagreed with the decision to allow Estrada to visit Fernando Poe Jr. when the actor was in a coma at St. Luke's Medical Center. That visit was allegedly arranged by National Security Adviser Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Gonzales yesterday denied any knowledge of the meeting in Malacañang or that he had arranged it.

"I'm sorry, but let's not talk about (the controversy over Estrada's departure)," he told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

However, Singson confirmed



SINGSON



GONZALES

that the meeting did take place and that Ms Arroyo, Gonzales and Ermita were present.

"It's really wrong for the Office of the President to arrange the passport; it should have been the Department of Justice," Singson told the INQUIRER in a phone interview, referring to Gonzales' purported effort.

Singson hurt?

In the meeting, the source said Gonzales denied ever saying that Singson was "hurt" by the Sandiganbayan's decision which allowed Estrada to have his knee operation in Hong Kong.

The governor told the INQUIRER that this was not true. "Hindi ako nagtatampo! Ganti ako! (I'm not hurt, I'm mad!)," he said.

According to the source, Gonzales assured Singson that Estrada would not escape prosecution.

"They assured me that the prosecution would proceed and

would be completed," Singson told the INQUIRER in Filipino. "If it's any consolation, Estrada's trip was shortened from his previous request of about six months."

Still, Singson said he was convinced Estrada would abandon the plunder case pending before the Sandiganbayan and would seek refuge in China, which does not have an extradition treaty with the Philippines.

Estrada is scheduled for medical treatment beginning tomorrow until Jan. 15 next year.

Singson also decried the practice of "double justice," claiming that Malacañang was strict with Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia but lenient with Estrada.

Like Estrada, the general is also accused of amassing ill-gotten wealth. He is under investigation for unexplained wealth worth at least P43 million.

Erap in a hurry to leave for HK, fears stop order from high court

By Armand N. Nocum and Cynthia D. Balana

OSTED President Joseph Estrada is in a hurry to leave for Hong Kong because of talk that Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. could issue a 24-hour temporary restraining order to be affirmed by the court in full session on Tuesday.

Already, the former leader failed to get an airline booking on Dec. 26, the new date set by the Sandiganbayan for Estrada to leave for Hong Kong for his knee-replacement operation.

"We have to move fast because of reports that a TRO to be issued by Chief Justice Davide is being worked out," said an Estrada ally who asked not to be named.

Davide could issue a TRO on his own even without the Supreme Court in session. But the TRO would be applicable for only 24 hours, the source added.

The Office of the Ombudsman earlier asked the court to issue a TRO on the Sandiganbayan order allowing Estrada to leave the country. This raised fears that the fallen leader would flee justice.

Estrada and defense lawyers were not available for comment, but the ex-president's son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, admitted that the issuance of a 24-hour TRO remained a possibility.

"But if they do, they are counting the wrath of the masses," Jinggoy said.

The young senator—Estra-



ESTRADA

da's co-accused in the plunder and perjury charges—said he had already been informed about Davide's power to issue a 24-hour TRO even while the high tribunal was in recess. However, he had not heard of reports that Davide was about to issue a TRO.

Estrada's spokesperson Dida-gen Diangalen raised doubts that Davide had powers to issue a TRO.

"They are exercising a judicial power; the TRO must be approved by the collegial body of the Supreme Court," Diangalen said.

Still, he said a 24-hour TRO

would not keep Estrada from leaving because the Supreme Court will resume session only in January next year.

Scheduled to leave for Hong Kong with Estrada are his wife, Sen. Loi Ejercito, Dilangan, Estrada's doctor Larry Hocson, and four police escorts.

Jinggoy had asked to accompany his father, but the Sandiganbayan had set a hearing on the matter on Dec. 28.

Meanwhile, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo assailed the special treatment accorded by the government to Estrada.

Ocampo said allowing Estrada to leave the country could prejudice his ongoing trial for plunder, a capital and non-bailable offense under Republic Act 7080.

He insisted that Estrada's arthritic knee condition could be treated here by excellent Filipino doctors like his successful eye operation in Makati City.

During the 12th Congress, Bayan Muna had filed three resolutions opposing the granting of any special treatment for the jailed former president which included the special privilege of undergoing medical treatment abroad or merely placing him under house arrest.

Ocampo stressed that the speedy and continuous trial of Estrada was a test case not only of the country's judicial system but also of the political will of President Macapagal-Arroyo to see to it that justice was carried out.

Task Force Tarongoy takes time out for Christmas

BAGHDAD—As Filipinos back home celebrated Christmas yesterday, here in Iraq, Filipino hostage Roberto Tarongoy entered his 55th day of captivity. Like the rest of the Arab world, Team Iraq's Task Force Tarongoy—the people in Baghdad sent to free him—spent the day at work.

"We are sparing no effort and taking no pause to secure the release of Tarongoy," said Team Leader Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Rafael Seguis in a statement. "If that means seeking our contacts on Christmas Day, so be it," he added.

Seguis said that, like most Filipinos all over the world, his team in Baghdad, namely, Charge D'Affaires Ricardo Endaya, Consul Ezzedin Tago and Attaches Angelo Jimenez and Joel Nunag, had a

simple and quiet *noche buena* on Christmas Eve.

"No war or calamity can, of course, postpone Christmas. Even soldiers in the battlefield take time out for prayers and simple celebrations," he said.

"We believe that working for the release of Tarongoy even during the holidays is more in keeping with the real spirit of Christmas, which is *damayan* [mutual aid]," he stressed.

Seguis added that their work was just the expression of President Macapagal-Arroyo's commitment not only to Tarongoy and his family but to the millions of overseas Filipino workers all over the world.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo has reiterated that "the protection of OFWs is a pillar of Philippine foreign policy."

DOT: Naia 3 vital to our goals

By Jerome Aning

THE OPENING of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 is vital to the government's goal of attracting more foreign tourists in the next six years, Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said yesterday.

Durano said tourist arrival rates until 2010 are projected to grow by an average 14.29 percent a year, which is way beyond the existing capacity of the country's existing premier airport.

"It is imperative that our premier airport would have the space for the expected surge in visitor arrivals in the years ahead," he said.

AP corrects story on nurses' visas

LOS ANGELES—In a Dec. 10 story about foreign nurses, The Associated Press reported erroneously that new regulations will block them from getting work permits while they wait for permanent residency.

Nurses and certain other workers from the Philippines, India and China who seek to live in the United States after Jan. 1 won't be able

Citing official data, Durano said 86.58 percent or 1.65 million of 1.86 million visitors in January-October this year entered through the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminals 1 and 2.

Twelve percent of the tourists during the period arrived in the country via the other international airports in Cebu (9.27 percent), Davao (0.23 percent), Laoag (1.61 percent), Subic (0.79 percent), Clark (0.09 percent) and General Santos City (0.01 percent).

The country's major seaports—Batangas, Manila, Subic, Cebu and Zamboanga—accounted for a meager 1.42 percent.

to apply for permanent residency based on employment until the State Department determines enough visas have been issued to all those who applied before them.

However, those authorized to work based on pending visa applications will remain eligible to work, said U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services spokeswoman Marie Sebrechts. AP

DAVAO BLAST

US Embassy help sought on 2 Americans

By TJ Burgunio

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez has asked the United States Embassy in Manila to help locate two Americans suspected of being involved in the May 2002 bomb explosion in a Davao City hotel so they could face prosecution here.

Gonzalez, in a letter to Ambassador Francis Riccardone, requested the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security in tracking down Michael Meiring and Stephen Hughes, believed to have fled to the US.

"Should both persons be confirmed as to their names, I request that background investigation be conducted by US authorities so that this incident can be properly prosecuted to its conclusion," he said.

Gonzalez said that Meiring, an American citizen born in South Africa, had been tagged as the main suspect in the setting off of a bomb inside his room at the Evergreen Hotel in Davao City on May 16, 2002.

Meiring, whose ID card identified him as a leader of the Moro National Liberation Front's Bangsamoro Armed Forces, "sur-

reptitiously disappeared" after reports claimed he was spirited away by embassy agents from a local hospital, he said.

"Consequently, the efforts of the Philippine government to investigate said incident could not be concluded," Gonzalez said in his letter.

Hughes, for his part, had claimed that he was in Meiring's hotel room 30 minutes before the blast, but did not find any bomb, Gonzalez disclosed.

"If these persons were correctly suspected for acts of terrorism by Philippine authorities, they also pose threats to the United

States," the justice secretary added in his letter.

Citing information provided by a media personality in the US, Gonzalez said Meiring had changed his name to Van De Meer and was living in Houston, Texas. The source also said that Hughes was teaching at the North Surry High School in Mount Airy, North Carolina.

"Since both are US citizens, and wanted by the Philippine authorities in connection with the bombing of the Evergreen Hotel in Davao City which clearly appears to be an act of terrorism, I am certain the US government will not tolerate this terrorist act," he said.

Contraband items become gifts to victims

From page A1

p.m. to hear Mass with the families of the more than 1,000 people who died in the series of storms and typhoons that battered Quezon and neighboring provinces early this month.

The four survivors miraculously found alive after 10 days under the rubble of the collapsed building were also present, Assistant Secretary Martin Crisostomo said.

According to Crisostomo, Ms Arroyo met with local officials of the province, military and police upon her arrival at the site of the collapsed building.

He said Ms Arroyo and the four survivors led a ceremony in which candles were lit on a symbolic tombstone. An ecumenical prayer service was also held for those who died in the tragedy.

After the ceremony, Ms Arroyo, Soliman and Cabinet Officer for Provincial Events Conrado Limcaoco distributed the Christmas packs to the calamity victims, Crisostomo said.

He quoted the President as assuring the 1,500 homeless families that they would be provided new housing in a nearby area.

'May Pasko pa ba?'

Reached by phone in Quezon, Soliman conveyed the victims'

lingering sense of loss.

"The children here are asking us: 'May Pasko pa po ba (Is there still a Christmas to celebrate)?'" she said.

Soliman said the ecumenical service at the disaster site could bring "closure" to the Repador incident and the overall calamity that befell the town.

"We give thanks for those who survived; at the same time, we're saying that it's time to move on," she said.

She also said the candies included in the Christmas packs were courtesy of her teenaged children Sandino and Marikit, who accompanied her in the Quezon trip.

Donate, not destroy

The BOC has been ordered to donate victims goods to the typhoon victims instead of destroying them, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said earlier.

Under the Tariff and Customs Code, smuggled goods seized by the customs bureau should either be auctioned off or destroyed to keep them from landing in the market. But the BOC had been taking the latter option because it was found that those joining the auctions were also the ones who had imported the stuff.

Amatong said the Department

of Finance had temporarily ordered the suspension of the Tariff and Customs ruling that specifies the destruction of contraband.

She said the smuggled goods now in BOC custody included used clothing, stuffed toys, bags and canned goods.

Yangco said that three nights ago, the customs bureau turned over to the DSWD seven containers of canned luncheon meat seized by anti-smuggling agents.

"But we're still subjecting [the goods] to tests by the Bureau of Food and Drugs to make sure, before we start giving them away," she said.

More hardship

At a press briefing Friday in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija, where she visited areas ravaged by the recent typhoons, Ms Arroyo called on the public to brace for more hardships and sacrifices so the Philippines could "move forward."

She said she was determined to make moves to reverse the economic downturn "no matter who gets hurt."

Commenting on surveys showing that Filipinos were not happy with the present state of affairs, particularly the economy, Ms Arroyo said what had been happening was a result of decades of too

much dependence on foreign debts, which the government was now repaying.

"Many will get angry with me, but if I don't make the right move, nothing will happen. There must be sacrifices for our country to move forward the way our people are expecting it to move," she said.

She urged the people to help the government in its campaign to raise revenues and to end the culture of corruption.

Ms Arroyo also distributed Christmas packs as well as 178 free patents and 300 land certificates, and announced that she was allowing the use of logs retrieved from the floods for building the houses of typhoon victims.

She gave P500,000 for the livelihood projects of 85 families who had heeded the government call to stop illegal logging.

General Tinio is known as "the horbed of illegal loggers." Government efforts have failed to stop the denudation of more than 50,000 hectares of forest in the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Gov. Tomas Joson III said it was the first time that a President had visited Nueva Ecija on Christmas Eve. With reports from Michelle V. Remo in Manila; Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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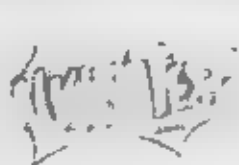
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Prepaid

CPP 'hit list' denounced

From page A1

Reyes, is already in your order of battle," Bello and Rosales said.

"Outside of Ric Reyes who currently chairs Akbayan, we, Walden Bello, chair emeritus of Akbayan and Loretta Ann P. Rosales, first Akbayan representative, are also among the individuals listed. Does this mean you intend to kill us one by one?" the two said.

Lagman and Tabara were assassinated on Feb. 6, 2001 and on Sept. 26, 2004, respectively. Ang Bayan identified Lagman as someone from the PMP (Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino), BMP (Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino) and Saniakas, and Tabara was identified with RPM (Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa)-Pilipinas.

Besides Bello, Boy Morales and Gani Serrano were tagged as Pop Dem (popular democrats) and part of IPD (Institute for Popular Democracy); Rosales and Reyes of Padayan, Manjette Lopez and Luddy Nacpil of PPD (Partido Proletaryo Demokratiko); Sony Melencio of SPP (Socialist Party of the Philippines), Nilo de la Cruz of RPM/RPA (Revolutionary Proletariat Army) ABB (Aex Boncayao Brigade), Ike de los Reyes of RPM-Mindanao; and Tito de la Cruz and Candad Pascual of MLPP (Marxist Leninist Party of

the Philippines) and RHB (Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan).

"These are the people who left [the CPP and its allied organizations]," Bello said when he and Rosales visited the Inquirer on Dec. 15.

But CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal strongly denied the existence of an "NPA hit list."

Figment of imagination

"That supposed NPA hit list was only a product of the malicious figment of imagination of military propagandists. It only aims to besmirch the popular image of the Red fighters from among the masses," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview when asked about the Ang Bayan diagram.

Rosal said the perennial resurrection of the alleged NPA "hit list" was part of the demolition job against the NPA being orchestrated by the military.

He scoffed at some former members of the revolutionary movement, who, according to him, were spreading wild tales on their supposed inclusion on the NPA list of people targeted for assassination.

"Probably, they are now in fear because they have committed crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement," Rosal said. "If they have nothing to fear, then why live in fear?"

Rosal said other people also left the movement, "but since

they have done nothing against the movement, they just go on with their lives."

He reiterated that the NPA had nothing to do with the murder of Lagman. "Popoy was killed by his former comrades in the ABB (the former urban unit of the NPA) because of his treachery when he turned himself as partner of Ping (Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former chief of the Philippine National Police) and Erap (former President Joseph Estrada)," Rosal said.

Deep sadness, anger

Nacpil is also worried of the possible implications of the Ang Bayan diagram.

She said she knew what it means to be labeled "counterrevolutionary" by the CPP.

"Several former leaders accused of being counterrevolutionaries and agents of the state have been killed by the CPP while others are harassed and pursued. But former colleagues are not the only targets—organizers and activists from people's organizations and movements not within the sphere of influence of the CPP are also being threatened and attacked," she said in a statement.

"Many of us who have given our youth and much of the best years of our lives in advancing the national democratic struggle, many of us whose loved ones have died

for that struggle, and those of us who dare follow a different path toward revolutionary change witness what the CPP leadership is doing with a mixture of deep sadness, frustration and anger. They are squandering whatever gains and successes achieved in all these decades of struggle," she said.

Nacpil, widow of Lean Alejandro, secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan when he was assassinated on Sept. 19, 1987 allegedly by government agents, said the CPP accusations and actions "have caused loss of lives and danger to individuals, as well as terrible harm to the socialist cause."

Erroneous information

She said the diagram and an accompanying short article were another pathetic attempt of the CPP to discredit Philippine progressive groups in its effort to project itself as the only true revolutionary movement.

"The article and diagram are based on patently erroneous information, outrageously biased judgements, antiquated analysis and sheer malice. More than pathetic, this is tragic for a movement claiming itself scientific and revolutionary and seeking to be a governing force," she said.

Bello and Rosales said they were puzzled and a little annoyed be-

cause "while we were all once national democrats, our movement was part of a much broader based anti-dictatorship united front that sought the end of one-man rule through the ouster of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos."

They noted that social democrats and Trotskyites marched side by side with national democrats, church groups and ordinary citizens who loved the country and wanted an end to the dictatorship. "In the international arena, our combined ranks actively led in strengthening the social movements against the ill effects of globalization on struggling economies of the Third World."

Rosales chairs the committee on human rights in the House of Representatives, while Bello is the recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize.

"Against which standards does the national democratic movement judge such efforts as counterrevolutionary?" they asked Sison, who is based in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Universal human rights

They said Sison would once again stand pat on his claim that he was waging an armed and just war in defense of the Filipino people's national and democratic interests.

"Considering that we are no longer part of your protracted

war, does this make us class enemies and fair game as enemy targets? It bothers us that your 36-year-old obsession over armed warfare asserts that all other forms of struggle are inherently inferior and a threat to the primacy of the over-arching goal of a violent upheaval," Bello and Rosales said.

"Even more deadly, it is justified to eliminate such a threat since your concept of revolutionary justice not only excuses but necessitates it."

The Philippine Left is a much, much bigger community than the CPP wants it to be, according to Bello and Rosales.

"We want to impart upon Sison that if the party he founded is truly interested in upholding universal human rights, it has to reassess its role in the progressive movement—as an agent of discourse and peaceful co-existence, not as a fascist harbinger of violence, hatred and murder," they said in the open letter.

Rosales earlier told Inquirer editors that the CPP was angry at Akbayan because the party list group, which has won three seats in the House, was taking a role that the CPP thinks it should do alone. "And we're doing it without guns," she said. With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Reds eye Iraq-style weapons

From page A1

Western Visayas city ahead of its 36th anniversary today, the Communist Party of the Philippines reiterated its intent to seize power and called on its followers to exploit popular discontent to topple President Macapaga-Arroyo.

The CPP said its forces were growing in size and were getting

more organized, adding its guerrilla wing, the New People's Army, was "now trying to develop the ability to make and use the weapons that the Iraqi resistance is now using."

These would include "rocket-propelled grenades, unprovoked explosive devices, mortars and other close range weapons," the statement said.

It did not say where the rebels would get the capability to make and use such weapons.

The 8,000-member guerrilla force has largely relied on firearms, rifle grenades and other weapons seized from the military, police and civilians as well as improvised land mines and other crude bombs.

The CPP statement said "the

revolutionary forces must employ all forms of struggle in ousting the Arroyo regime and accumulating strength thereby."

It suggested exploiting popular sentiment raised by the death earlier this month of top movie star Fernando Poe Jr. who lost to Ms. Arroyo in the May 10 presidential election.

Poe, who died after suffering a stroke, had never conceded de-

feat and charged he was cheated of victory. His funeral last week was one of the largest in the country's recent history.

The CPP also said NPA guerrillas should exploit alleged grumbling within the Armed Forces following charges of corruption against senior and retired military officials.

The communist rebels called

off peace talks with Manila in August, accusing the Arroyo administration of not doing enough to persuade the United States and its Western allies to remove them from these governments' lists of foreign terrorist organizations.

Both sides have called unilateral ceasefires covering the Christmas season, but there is no sign peace talks will be resumed. AFP

N. Korea ready for market economy

From page A1

cialist overseeing UNDP projects in Asian socialist countries, was told that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the North's official name) was watching whether the second Bush administration would continue its policy of "hatred and hostility" or adopt a less strident approach to the government of Kim Jong Il.

Washington has aggressively blamed Pyongyang, which is believed to have eight nuclear weapons, for undermining regional stability and condemned it as a "rogue state."

The six-party talks aimed at defusing the tension have been stalled, but North Korea and the United States are expected to resume negotiations in Beijing after the reelected Bush administration decides whether its foreign policy, dominated by neoconservative hawks during the first Bush presidency, will adopt a new tack.

Despite its status as the last

bastion of Stalinism in the world, North Korea has made some tentative steps in recent times toward a less rigid state and economy.

Downsizing of personality cult

A visit to Pyongyang reveals a perceptible downsizing of the Kim Jong Il personality cult. Portraits of the 63-year-old leader have vanished from key buildings although his image, along with that of Kim Il Sung, his father and predecessor, still adorns the main halls of a few select offices.

The state media have stopped referring to Kim Jong Il as the "Dear Leader" as they continue to play up his prodigious achievements. In one instance, he was said to have shot a hole in one on his first swing at Pyongyang's only golf course.

At least two special economic zones, inspired by the Chinese models in the 1980s, are operating. But their performance hasn't been

rated by independent sources.

On an Air Koryo national flag carrier flight from Beijing, Nelia Sancho and I met a group of Swiss development experts, who said they were contracted to advise the Koreans on minimizing their dependence on agricultural pesticides.

Sancho is the president of the Philippines-DPRK Friendship Society.

For its part, the UNDP is providing \$200,000 in seed money for the production of trendy designed-for-export-only jackets by Korean women. If successful, the agency will help finance expansion of the enterprise in other parts of North Korea.

Despite the tiny openings, North Korea remains dirt poor by the standards of East Asian countries. People trudge long distances in the blustery cold due to few public conveyances.

Heavily made-up police

Only the few hotels considered

to be world class, such as the 45-story Koryo Hotel, are heated. They offer a few amenities to tourists such as karaoke bars, sauna baths and robe counters designated as "Cloaking." The authorities still thought it necessary to have heavily made-up attractive policewomen direct traffic on largely deserted roads.

During a visit to the National Study Hall, a computerized library-cum-learning center, our guide was reluctant to take us to the cafeteria "where the food may not be of good quality."

To signify it was ready to warm relations with the Philippines, with which it established diplomatic relations in 2001, Vice Chair Jon Yong Jin of the Committee for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries, toasted President Macapaga-Arroyo's health at a dinner he hosted for Sancho and me. His government was ready to bring North Korean culture, including its famous cold noodles and Pyongyang circus to

the Philippines, we were told.

Oh Carol

In a society virulently opposed to the West but which curiously issued Princess Diana postage stamps in the '80s, we found it a tad amusing that the Neil Sedaka hit "Oh Carol" was familiar among many citizens. Three people we met readily obged us with their full-throated interpretations of the song that was popular in the '60s. A close second was "Love Story."

Our request to see the US spy ship Pueblo was immediately granted. It's now a museum preserved in its original state when captured in North Korean territorial waters in 1968. Our female military guide showed us the bullet-riddled deck, bridge, the high-tech intelligence gear, the quarters, and the galley and mess where three Filipinos served. The 83-men crew, skuppered by Commander Lloyd Bucher, who died last year, were released 11 months after signing a confession and

President Lyndon Johnson issued an apology to North Korea after initially denying any wrongdoing.

"President Johnson boasted it was the first and last time for the United States to apologize to us. But the Americans had to eat crow when they again apologized after their helicopter was shot down in our territory in 1994," deadpanned our English speaking guide.

With natural disasters, an egregious one-man rule, a society woefully short of basic services defining its identity, North Korea stands today at the crossroads.

If diplomacy and compromise are given the space they deserve in the nuclear issue talks that may well result in a just and lasting accord, it may be the signal North Korea needs to knock history off its course and bring itself to march in step with the rest of East Asia. Otherwise, a poor and hungry isle of humanity with proliferating nukes is a prospect too awesome to contemplate.

Tragedy brings Punta folk even closer

From page A1

There is not much space for gardening and yet every Tuesday before their lives were changed forever, the villagers would bring to town their weekly harvest of vegetables, mostly planted in recycled cans and plastic bags.

Even during the critical months after the landslides, the women revived their potted vegetable gardens around the makeshift shelters.

Beloved nurse

The people of Punta fondly remember Natividad J. Rich, who recently sold all her assets in the United States to retire in her native Maasin City.

Rich herself remembers how she first gained recognition as a newly sworn rural health nurse in the early 1960s by turning Punta into a model pilot rural health unit.

"The people helped me a lot; they were very cooperative," she recalled when she visited San Francisco for my father's 80th birthday in November last year, more than three decades after she left Panos Island.

Rich was our rural health nurse at a time when there was no doctor to provide primary health care to the people of San Francisco. I remember having to take an hour-long ride on a frail motor boat with her just so I, then

a 5-year-old, could see a doctor in Maasin in the mainland.

She willingly got up at night to answer calls from ailing villagers, walked mountain trails for hours, and braved the strong waves brought by the habagat (southwest monsoon).

For complicated cases, she consulted her brother Gil, who was then working with the province of Southern Leyte as a rural health doctor.

Rich stayed with us for many years. As my surrogate mothers, she and my aunt Corazon wept when they brought me to Davao City, where my parents lived, to start my schooling.

After Rich left for the United States in the mid-1970s, the people she had served missed her greatly. They never forgot her, for there was no other nurse as dedicated and gutsy as she.

Urgent need

The need for reliable health service is as urgent as ever.

The nearest hospital is about two hours away by car (in Sogod) or by pump boat (in Maasin).

It is no wonder that the people welcomed orthopedic surgeon Diego Yuboc when he decided to come home to San Francisco in the late 1980s after years of practice in Mindanao.

With the competent medical services he gave, the people em-

braced him. He was our town mayor for nine consecutive years until May.

Yuboc's mayor-by-day-doctor-by-night stint required him to convert a small room beside his office into a clinic. There, he would sometimes perform minor operations under the light provided by a small reading lamp.

Abundant help

The survivors are grateful for the help they have received from various groups.

At the height of the crisis, Ormoc residents brought truckloads of rice and sugar. Other donors gave bancas and fishing nets that enabled the fishermen to resume their livelihood, and carpentry tools that proved equally valuable when they started building new homes.

The Salvation Army donated 10 motorized bancas, each of which is now being run by a group of five fishermen.

When we visited the relocation site, Barangay Captain Ricky Subang was supervising the setting up of a decorticating machine. Cocotech is helping the village organize a cooperative that will produce twine and textiles from coconut coir.

Plan International also donated a small truck as part of its project to rehabilitate the areas destroyed by the landslides.

Environmentalists are studying various options, including the propagation of vetiver grass on the mountain slopes to help stabilize the soil, according to my cousin, Jilson Mautin, who has accompanied many of these groups to the numerous landslide areas in Punta, Liloan and San Ricardo.

Relatives now based in the cities and abroad sent cash, which was used to buy food and other necessities.

In one instance, we were able to pool P120,000 from relatives. The money was used to hire extra labor to speed up the construction of the houses and the excavation of the septic tanks.

Improving infrastructure

When the landslides hit on Dec. 19 last year, San Francisco was isolated by the numerous streams that swelled and made the road impassable. My children were then on a vacation, and my cousins had to come in a motor boat from Liloan to collect them.

It was the first time my family decided to spend Christmas in Leyte.

In the past, on good days, we had to negotiate the bumpy, 10-kilometer road linking Liloan and San Francisco for over an hour.

The tragedy must have awak-

ened the consciousness of our national leadership. The roads have since been widened and graded, and the long-delayed concreting

of the national road was started by the contractor, Italian-Thai, immediately after the May elections.

The project, expected to be completed in about three years, will link Panason's four municipalities of Liloan, San Francisco, Pintuyan and San Ricardo.

When President Macapaga-Arroyo visited San Francisco immediately after the landslides, Smart set up a small antenna that was strong enough for people to send and receive text messages on their mobile phones.

As the construction activities went on full swing this year, Smart's facilities were upgraded. Even subscribers of Globe now enjoy a strong signal in areas along the seashore.

With better communication and transport facilities, the people of Panason are hoping for better economic opportunities.

The island is the take-off point of the roll-on-roll off (ro-ro) ferry service between Leyte and Mindanao. There is now talk of putting up a ferry terminal in San Ricardo on the most end of the island as an alternative to that operating in Liloan, which in turn is linked by a span as long as the Quiapo bridge to mainland Leyte.

If this materializes, then Surigao City in Mindanao will be about an hour-and-a-half away by ro-ro. At least, the much-hyped Strong Republic National

Highway is getting to be a reality in our place.

Reunion

On Nov. 4, we gathered once again for the 80th birthday celebration of my father, Dominador.

Like the time when we all came home for my grandfather's 80th birthday in 1976, the whole village took part in preparing for the occasion.

The common questions were: "Will we push through with our reunion in May 2005? Where will we hold it?"

As far as I am concerned, we should, and it does not matter where.

We still have a lot of work to do and we still have to mobilize resources and support. But all of us are looking forward to the completion of the relocation site.

The survivors plan to clean up the now deserted Punta and slowly revive it into the economically productive enclave that it once was.

Our relatives may not be able to live there anymore, but for most of us, Punta is not meant to be abandoned and forgotten.

"We shared so many happy memories there," said my cousin Manlou Maglana, a Davao-based cardiologist, who rushed home to Punta immediately after hearing about the landslides last year.

She had been away for more than 30 years.

Visionary leaders map the country's future with

Globe PLATINUM

Globe Platinum and ABS-CBN hosted a rare gathering of the country's most influential visionary leaders, who shared their forecast of the nation's standing in the year 2005. Dubbed as the ABS-CBN Forum on the Filipino Future, the affair pooled the expertise of resource persons from the government, private sector, NGOs and the media to discuss the country's current situation and the possible trends in the coming year.

The esteemed group chaired by ABS-CBN CEO Eugenio "Gabby" Lopez III deliberated on a wide range of topics affecting the country's immediate future: the state of governance, management vs. patronage, economic prospects, health, environment and safety, education, the media, youth and population, cultural values, crime, peace and order, countryside development, law and social justice issues.

Participants who provided their insights included Washington SyCip, founder of the SGV accounting firm, and SGV partner Mildred Ramos; Rep. Joey Salcedo of Albay, head of the House Committee on Economic Affairs; Jaime Laya, head of the accounting firm Laya Managaya and culture sector manager; Gov. Grace Padaca, a non-traditional politician in Isabela; Undersecretary Mike Luz of the Dept. of Education; Ramon Villegas of De La Salle University, a culture sector expert; Eli Pinto Mansor, DTI consultant on export affairs and leader in the international promotion of Filipino design; Aurora Silayan-Go, population and youth affairs activist; Calixto Chikiamco, economist; Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, of the Philippine General Hospital, health sector activist; Fr. Nilo Tanalega SJ, countryside development activist and head of the Gawad Geny Lopez awards; Mehinda Quintos de Jesus, media activist and chair of the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility; Teresita Ang-See, peace and order activist; Dr. Danny Meneses, head of Breast Cancer Network

and health and environment activist; and Honorata de Leon Mandilag, environmental consultant. Rep. Nene Acosta of Bukidnon and Mindanao culture leader Edward Ibiah Lim also sent their position papers for the forum's discussion.

Globe Platinum bore witness to the meeting of minds who prepared a position article based on research data, qualitative perceptions, and the present situation to come up with possible solutions to help alleviate the country's condition. The groups' conclusions will be disseminated to the public through the network's TV and print mediums.

After the taxing brainwork, even the country's greatest minds needed a little relaxation. Globe Platinum and ABS-CBN treated the participants to sumptuous cocktails that helped them unwind while mingling some more with each other. Also helping out to make the forum a success were Globe Solutions, GlobeQuest, ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) and Metro Magazine who were co-presenters of the said event.

Beyond enriching the lives of people, Globe Platinum acutely takes part in steering the nation's future towards a better horizon, a social responsibility that unites with the collective effort of the country's movers and shakers to alleviate the lives of every Filipino. You too can make a change and be part of this respected set. Existing subscribers of any Globe Plan with an average monthly usage of P4,000 and up (exclusive of taxes and adjustments) for the last twelve months and with good credit standing, may upgrade to a Globe Platinum plan. You can also be a Globe Platinum member by getting either a G-Plan or fully consumable G-Flex Plan at P5,000, P7,000, or P10,000 at any Globe Business Center or Hub. Special perks include consumable rates for international roaming and IDD. Get your Globe Platinum membership now and start experiencing a world of exclusive privileges.



Environmental consultant Honorata de Leon Mandilag shares her insights with the group.



Facilitating the forum's discussion in Genere for Alternative Development Initiatives President Nick Pavia.



Health sector activist Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan of Philippine General Hospital participates in the group discussion.



Population and youth affairs activist Aurora Silayan-Go and economist Calixto Chikiamco interject in the culture sector expert Ramon Villegas of De La Salle University.



SGV partner Mildred Ramos expresses her views on the topic.



Peace and order activist Teresita Ang-See reacts on the topic being discussed.



Commenting on the points presented is Fr. Nilo Tanalega SJ, countryside development activist.



ABS-CBN Publishing President Ernie Lopez opens the forum's discussion.



Media activist Melinda Chua and ABS-CBN Publishing President Ernie Lopez.



ABS-CBN CEO Gabby Lopez.



Aurora Silayan-Go of the Foundation for Adolescent Development.



Posing for the camera are ABS-CBN Publishing Marketing Head Philip Cu-Uying, Isabela Governor Grace Padaca, Globe Telecom Head for Broadcast Cable Salcedo, ABS-CBN News Channel's Yvonne Novenario and Aga Oquian of ABS-CBN Publishing.



Unwinding after a successful forum are Globe Platinum Head Cathy Salcedo and Globe Platinum Head Nene Acosta.

Pope: Troubled world needs Jesus

From page A1

of millions of others on live television in more than 70 countries, including several predominantly Muslim nations.

Showing the signs of his illness and the weight of his office, the leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics said the globe was marked by violence and despair in many places.

"Before the crib where you lie helpless, let there be an end to the spread of violence in its many forms, the source of untold suffering," he said, wearing gold-colored vestments.

The 84-year-old Pope's message was the shortest it has ever been in his 27 Christmas seasons as Pontiff—a concession to the illness that makes it difficult for him to speak more than a few sentences at a time.

"Let there be an end to the numerous situations of unrest which risk degenerating into open conflict; let there arise a firm will to seek peaceful solutions, respectful of the legitimate aspirations of individuals and

peoples," he said.

A peace punch

The message was only about half as long as it has been in previous years. Still, it packed the type of peace punch that has become a trademark of his papacy.

"You, Prince of true peace, help us to understand that the only way to build peace is to flee in horror from evil, and to pursue goodness with courage and perseverance," he said, "Men and women of good will, of every people on the earth, come with trust to the crib of the savior!"

It was the second event for the weak Pope in less than 12 hours.

At his Midnight Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, he read a brief sermon in which he said the troubled world needed the message of Jesus more than ever.

No longer able to walk, he sat sightly bent on his wheeled throne at the Midnight Mass, attended by representatives of some 150 governments, and appeared very pensive at times.

During the Midnight Mass,

Christ's birthplace of Bethlehem was not far from the Pope's mind. One of the Pontiff's prayers was for the Middle East.

"May the Holy Land, dear to the faithful of the three great monotheistic religions, be able to see times of prosperity and peaceful co-existence and reciprocal respect among all those who live there," urged the prayer, read by a German man.

Bethlehem scene

In Bethlehem, pilgrims and a new Palestinian leadership celebrated Christmas in the town of Jesus' birth with prayers for peace on Saturday, lifted by fresh hope following Yasser Arafat's death.

At Midnight Mass, moderate leader Mahmoud Abbas filled the seat which had been left empty for Arafat for three Christmases past because Israel had stopped him from travelling to the West Bank town—accusing him of fomenting bloodshed, a charge he denied.

Welcoming the new leaders, the Latin Patriarch for the Holy Land, a Palestinian, urged all parties to end violence.

"It has lasted too long," Michel Sabbah, Pope John Paul's representative, said in his message. "It is time for Palestine and Israel to defeat the evil of violence and give birth to a society of brothers and sisters in which nobody is subject to another, nobody is occupied by another and nobody threatens the security of another."

Amid the incense and prayers, the silver-haired Abbas in his gray businessman's suit cut a very different figure to Arafat, who favored olive uniforms and a black and white headress.

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Abbas, who is expected to win an election next month to choose a successor to Arafat, is urging an end to fighting and wants talks with Israel.

"We extend our hand to the Israelis. We want to negotiate, to reach peace—a peace built on justice and right," Abbas told a meeting in Bethlehem on Friday evening.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has also called 2005 a year of opportunity for peace.

Reuters

Mary, Joseph wear waterproof boots

INFANTA, Quezon—The Nativity scene at the cathedral in this storm-ravaged town was reenacted this year with Mary and Joseph wearing waterproof boots.

Joseph carried a spade instead of a staff—a reminder of how the townsfolk have had to dig themselves out of layers of mud brought down by the storms that devastated the area.

Catholics still attended Friday's traditional Christmas Eve Mass in their best clothes even though they had to pick their way to the cathedral, itself only recently dug out of the mud, through muddy streets.

Bishop Rolando Tirona yesterday said the church was trying to keep the Christmas spirit alive although the tragedy was still fresh in everyone's minds.

"What is important for us is to lift the spirit of the people," he told Agence France Presse near the cathedral.

"They are responding beautifully. They come to the Masses with a smile on their faces," he said, pointing at crowds in the church that was dug from the mire by Philippine Navy engineers.

The bishop recalled that he was initially warned no one would come to the Mass. "But the place was packed," he said.

But things are still tough in Infanta and its neighboring coastal towns of Real and General Nakar, which took the brunt of a storm that hit on Nov. 29, followed by typhoon "Yoyong" on Dec. 2.

About 1,800 people were left dead or missing, most of

them in the three towns.

Although most roads to the towns have been cleared, electricity has not yet been restored and those lucky enough to still have homes are still clearing out the mud left by the flash floods.

Infanta resident Marife Aumentado, 12, said she was enjoying Christmas even though her family had lost most of its possessions.

No one in the family died, she said as she walked across a sea of mud with her nine-year-old cousin. Best of all, a neighbor gave her a present, a large mud-stained "Hello Kitty" doll.

"I'm very happy I got a doll. It was the only gift I received," she said, smiling.

Bishop Tirona said the Infanta folk had pooled resources to get Christmas presents for the relief workers to show their gratitude for their help.

He had instructed parish priests in the affected towns to include in their usual Christmas ceremonies any rites that might help people deal with the tragedy, he said.

"There are so many who lost not only their homes but their relatives as well. That is the truly sad thing," he said, adding: "We have met some and we can only console with them."

Tirona also said he had not met people who lost their faith after the disaster.

Instead, he said, they blamed illegal loggers who allegedly stripped the mountain of forest cover, allowing the deadly landslides to occur.

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Poe's death ...

From page A1

When news broke on Dec. 14 that Poe had succumbed to a massive stroke, the site received 2.2 million page views from 1.5 million unique visitors, its highest-ever one-day record.

The figure surpassed the 2.1 million page views recorded the day after the May 10 elections, when Poe contested President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for a full six-year term.

In the days immediately after Poe's death, the site averaged 1.7 million page views a day, 70 percent above the site's average site traffic of one million page views a day.

The site received 2 million page views on Dec. 22, the day Poe was buried. From Poe's death to his burial, the site received 17 million page views.

Over 100,000 users also viewed the site's free, live video streaming of Poe's funeral procession and burial as broadcast on GMA Network, video streaming provider Bustop said.

The number of people who watched Poe's funeral online on streaming video was the highest number of viewers the company had ever recorded on its servers, according to Wilson Chua, B-

stop president.

In contrast, only 23,000 users requested video streaming during the May 2004 elections.

A page view is a request for a single webpage on a given site. The number of page views measures the volume of traffic accessing a certain website. As circulation shows the level of readership of a newspaper, the number of page views indicates how many times a website is being accessed by online users.

A page view is not the same as a hit, a measurement that includes images as well as Web pages.

Previous traffic peaks on INQ7.net, the online news website of GMA-7 and the Philippine Daily Inquirer, were the oath-taking of Ms Arroyo at the height of the EDSA People Power II uprising in January 2001 (1.8 million page views) and the July 2003 Oakwood rioting (2.6 million page views for a two-day period).

INQ7.net, which operates independently of its two parent companies, sources its news from the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA-7, as well as from its in-house breaking news team of editors and reporters. The site also carries a selection of stories from the fortnightly magazine Newsbreak.

Pinoy machos vain ...

From page A1

than their Asian counterparts to value good looks and spend time and money on grooming.

While a considerable number of Asian men felt that looking good was "neither important nor unimportant," 58 percent of Filipino men thought it was "very important," according to the survey conducted by global market research company Synovate Inc.

In the same survey, 48 percent of Filipino males felt they were sexually attractive, coming a close second to Americans, who scored 53 percent.

Only 25 percent of men in Singapore felt they were attractive, 17 percent both in Taiwan and China, 16 percent in Korea, and a mere 12 percent in Hong Kong.

"All this attention to grooming seems to have a positive impact on self-esteem, too, with around half of Filipino males agreeing that they consider themselves sexually attractive. That's double their nearest rivals in the region," Synovate managing director Carole Sarthou said in a statement.

Synovate interviewed 3,000 men aged 15 to 64 through the Global Omnibus telephone survey. The study was conducted among men from various socioeconomic classes in Manila, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and the United States.

The survey also looked into the motivation behind the men's pursuit of good looks. Surprise, surprise—it was not mainly to impress or attract women.

It was learned that 9 out of 10 Filipino men liked to look good for themselves, with only 5 out of 10 saying they liked to look good for others.

This indicated that Filipinos were more vain than American males, of whom only 76 percent said they liked to look good for themselves. Koreans ranked next to Filipinos in wanting to look good for their own sake.

Despite being the most vain, only 22 percent of Filipino men had a kitay [personal effects] kit, while 85 percent of Koreans had one.

The most popular grooming item for Filipino men was the cologne or perfume. Seventy-four percent favored this; 67 percent preferred deodorant; 40 percent, mouthwash; 34 percent, conditioner; 30 percent, gel or mousse; and 21 percent chose shaving cream or lotion.

"The findings have a wide-ranging implication for the marketers of... personal grooming products. Traditionally, marketers have addressed this market by selling to wives, mothers, sisters, girlfriends. Now, they can go directly to the newly minted beautiful male," Sarthou said.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Rumsfeld says US troops in Iraq face bleak new year amid violence

US poll-inspired 'incivility' named year's top word

BAGHDAD—A tanker blast killed eight persons and wounded 19 in Baghdad on Christmas Eve as US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld admitted on a surprise visit to troops in Iraq that they faced a bleak New Year.

The truck exploded at 9:30 p.m. in the affluent Baghdad neighborhood of Mansur, said US military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel James Hutton, adding that the casualty toll might rise as emergency crews sifted the wreckage.

The blast came amid a wave of bombings around the country as insurgents try to derail landmark elections scheduled for next month.

"I don't know if it was a truck bomb or not, but the truck did explode. It's too early too say if it was a suicide attack," Hutton said.

A huge fireball ripped through the area near the Jordanian, Libyan and Moroccan embassies, damaging several homes, witnesses said.

Ambulance sirens wailed and shots rang out in the chaos that erupted after the blast, where a few hours earlier some 80 Christians braved the streets to attend Christmas Eve mass amid fears of sectarian attack.

Chaldean patriarch Emmanuel Delly had ordered that the usual 10 p.m. service be brought forward to 5 p.m., like last year, as Iraq's dwindling Christian community of some 700,000 people braced for the worst.

"Despite the threats, my husband and I have come. I will not let the terrorists intimidate me and make me shirk my religious duties," said Maha, a 50-year-old lawyer, at the heavily guarded Church of the Assump-



tion of the Virgin Mary.

Flying into the country at dawn, Rumsfeld painted a bleak picture of Iraq ahead of the much anticipated Jan. 30 elections.

"All along the way, it is bumpy and it's tough... It is not a smooth, easy path to success, there are setbacks," Rumsfeld told troops at Camp Palujah outside the rebel stronghold recaptured by the military last month.

"But you will look back when you are about my age and you will be proud."

Rumsfeld's first stop was in the main northern city of Mosul, where a suicide attack on a US army base killed 22 people on Tuesday.

Rumsfeld told troops that although the situation looked "bleak" for US forces in Iraq, they would ultimately prevail over insurgents and be part of something "truly historic." AFP

SGT. ANGELA Damon of Buckfield, Maine sings Christmas carols during a midnight Christmas service at FOB Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 25.

Japan threatens retaliation against North Korea

TOKYO—Japan on Friday threatened retaliation against North Korea such as cutting off economic ties unless the communist state returned Japanese people it has kidnapped or gave a "sincere response" on their fate.

Japan said it would send a "strong protest" to North Korea accusing it of handing over false evidence to prove the deaths of eight Japanese people it abducted during the Cold War.

"We will have to take a serious response this time if North Korea does not sincerely respond," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda, the Japanese government spokesperson.

"We strongly demand that North Korea immediately send home the survivors. The Japanese government

demands the sincere response of North Korea."

A recent poll found that nearly two-thirds of Japanese people want economic sanctions against North Korea, despite warnings by the communist state that it would consider the move an act of war.

Japan has already suspended food aid to North Korea.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who has taken political risks by trying to engage Pyongyang, called the false evidence submitted by North Korea "extremely regrettable" and refused to rule out sanctions.

"I would like to leave all kinds of options open," Koizumi told reporters.

Koizumi has previously indicated that sanctions—which could take the form of banning re-exports by North Koreans in Japan or barring Pyongyang's ships from docking at Japanese ports—would be a last resort.

In a sign that he still favors a cautious approach, Koizumi declined to set a deadline for North Korea to respond to the protest, which will be submitted through diplomats in Beijing.

"We are not thinking about it at present," Koizumi said of imposing a deadline.

Hosoda, asked whether Japan was presenting North Korea with an ultimatum, said: "I don't see it that way." AFP

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Asia marks Christmas with prayers, fireworks, fears of terror attacks

SINGAPORE—Indonesia's Christians packed tightly guarded churches to celebrate Christmas on Saturday despite fears of terrorist attacks, while the president of the Philippines appealed for an end to corruption in a seasonal message.

Celebrants from tropical Singapore to the chilly South Korean capital of Seoul prayed, tore open presents and feasted with families. In Australia, revelers partied on Sydney's beaches.

In Indonesia, Christians celebrated Christmas under tight security amid warnings that terrorists linked to al-Qaida planned attacks in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

More than 140,000 police safeguarded embassies, churches, malls and hotels, police said. The faithful, however, shrugged off the warnings and heavy rain to pack churches in the capital, Jakarta. There were no reports of violence.

Soldiers with machine guns guarded Santa Anna Roman

Catholic Church in East Jakarta as worshippers passed through metal detectors at the entrance.

Santa Anna was one of 11 churches targeted in bomb attacks across Indonesia on Christmas Eve in 2001, killing 19 people and wounding about 100. The attacks were blamed on Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian terror network.

The Christian minorities in Muslim-majority Pakistan and predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka, where churches have come under attack, also celebrated with police on alert. Authorities also deployed security forces to guard churches in Muslim-dominated Bangladesh. There were no reports of trouble.

In China, Christians held midnight Mass in government-sanctioned churches in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities, while millions more celebrated in private. The government

says just over 1 percent of Chinese—or about 15 million people—are Christian. But the number is likely much higher because many Christians, risking harassment and detention, worship in unauthorized "house churches." AP

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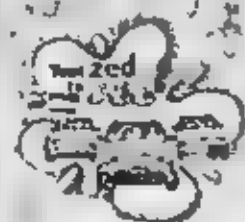
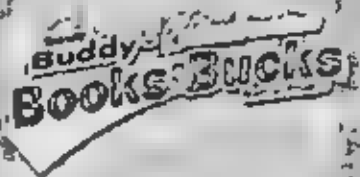
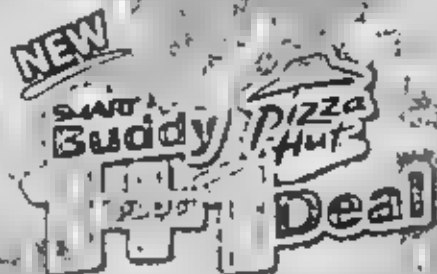
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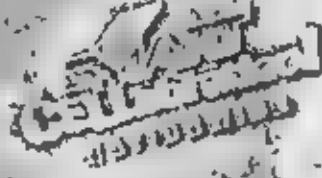
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The day after

FROM THE TABLES of the rich, groaning with food, to the humble homes of the poor, where there is little materially to share—for all of us, Christmas is over. This doesn't mean the holiday season is over since it will last until after New Year's Day, after all. Still, for all of us, the giving and receiving is pretty much over.

Except for the very well-off, most Filipinos have gone through the holidays spending far more than they should. Many of us had surely hoped to receive more than we actually got. Whether it is better to give more than we got is something each individual must decide. We believe that this holiday season, far more people did more genuine giving than in recent years.

Somehow, despite the financial pressures that face all of us, people still found a way to give more. Among middle-class Filipinos, we have seen a remarkable trend in recent years. People, instead of giving material gifts, have been giving to charity or to good causes in the name of their friends. This is truly a remarkable way to celebrate Christmas. We hope more and more people, as they experience this kind of sharing, decide in the coming years to share in this manner as well.

Spontaneously, in many offices throughout the land, companies also decided to give up part, or all, of their Christmas party budgets so they could send relief goods to people suffering from the effects of the typhoons. Instead of Kriss Kringle and games, people donated to charity. There were a number of cases where management was surprised by their employees taking the initiative to give up parties so they could give to those in need. Each and every Filipino, from whatever walk of life, who gave up something so that others might have a little something, is a Filipino who truly knows what the holidays are all about.

The Armed Forces and rebels both put away their rifles, so that the country may have a little peace. This makes the holidays even more precious. At least for a little while, throughout the land where rebellion and military offensives otherwise dominate life, at least everyone can enjoy some peace and quiet.

Poverty haunts us. Natural disasters have afflicted us. Politics and rebellions divide us. And yet, rich and poor alike, most of us came together as families, and spent some time in prayer and laughing, joking, sharing. We did it in many different ways, each according to our means, but each, we believe, at least for a moment, united by the ties of affection and celebration. If we find our wallets empty, let us hope it was because we spent for the most unfortunate, and not merely to display our good fortune.

Foreigners always say that Christmastime in the Philippines is like no other. They are right. In a world that has grown increasingly materialistic, good fortune is confused with the accumulation and display of possessions. Here, Christmas is still for the family, the extended family. This is, in the end, for all the faults of our clannish nature, a truly precious thing we can all enjoy.

The days leading up to the holidays were filled with stories of private and public grief, of tragedies shared and experienced. These stories of grief reminded all of us to cherish all the more those we love. These stories inspired us to reach out, with an embrace, with flowers, with a prayer. Our country has experienced many Christmases marked by adversity and misery. Our elders can always tell us that even if things look bad, things have been worse before.

It can never be so bad, however, if we always remember that those who have less should receive a little something from those with more. If we always bear in mind that we all feel the same emotions, and are capable of the same wants, then those who are wanting can always hope for a time when today's hunger and hopelessness will go away.

Order to the border

DURING A YEAR-END press conference, US President George W. Bush again tackled the problem of foreign workers that arrive in his country every year. He recognized that the system needs to concentrate on catching criminals and drug traffickers.

The Mexican government should aggressively take on the commitment of pushing the White House to make a migration accord a reality.

FOREIGN COMMENT

In fact, legalizing the status of millions of migrants would bring order to the border, because orderly border crossings and distribution of jobs would allow officials to identify and track foreign workers. The way the system works now is chaotic and opens the possibility that terrorists will take advantage and use it for their own benefit.

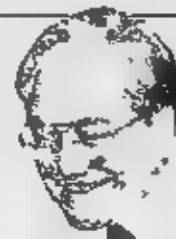
El Universal (Mexico City)



The morning after

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz



made their ordeal a little more bearable

Everywhere in Metro Manila, and also in the rest of the country, people paused in their merry-making to perform their works of mercy. They were not limited to the wealthy with plenty to spare but included the middle income earners and even the poor with little to share. They extended their generosity quietly, without fanfare or publicity or expectation of merited praise. Except for some companies that announced their goodness and so commercialized it, most of the people made their donations anonymous.

It is one of the virtues of our race that we spontaneously rise as one to help others when tragedy or misfortune strikes. We showed this selflessness again this year to soften the cruel fate inflicted on the typhoon victims. They could not celebrate Christmas yesterday with the usual cheer as the rest of the country did albeit without the customary flair. But the "better angels of our nature" made their misfortune less pathetic with acts of comfort and concern.

Let us hope that this extraordinary trait of generosity and compassion will never cease to adorn our nation's character. Many of the high values we nourished in the genteel past have deserted us in these more sophisticated times, like simple courtesy, respect for elders, mod-

esty in style and attire, and even integrity. If we should also lose our innate kindness for our fellow human beings, and for animals too, then our people will be truly lost as well.

The inertia of happiness is still brightening the rest of the Yuletide, and we should enjoy it with the still blinking Christmas lights. Considering the care and artistry with which they were strung up to welcome the coming of the Infant Lord, it will be an unwilling effort to dismantle them when the joyous season ends. Until that prosaic moment comes, let us continue to savor the fantasy of Santa Claus, of his elves creating toys beyond imagination and belief, of children whose greatest gift of innocence must in time end with the coming of age and reality.

We now joyfully await the coming of the New Year next week for this is still another event that calls for continued celebration. Meanwhile, we may take the opportunity to revive discarded loves, renew forgotten friendships, heal wounds that have festered, and, yes, still send greeting cards that may have been unintentionally omitted. Christmas comes but once a year but not only for a day like yesterday. It will continue until the last colorful lantern is unhooked, the left-over feast from the *noche buena* is consumed, and we settle down at last to face the real world again.

In our jubilation over the birth of the Infant Lord, did we forget to greet him on his birthday and to thank him for his many blessings on our beloved land and its people? I hope not. Confronted by our current difficulties, we should continue to keep strong our faith in his goodness, remembering that, as Albert Einstein says, "God is subtle, but he is not malicious."

Christmas moments

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD



QUESTION: When was the first plane ride of the Holy Family?

Answer: On their flight to Egypt!

Question: And who was the pilot?

Answer: Ahh...Pontius Pilot!

Today being Christmas, we are just trying to inject humor in our opening line, but really there was nothing humorous about the first Christmas. A pregnant woman had to give birth to her first-born Son in a lowly manger because there was no room for them at the inn. A few days later, a worried father had to take the Child and his mother and flee to Egypt in the night because they were being hunted. (Mt. 2, 13-15, 19-23)

The message of the Holy Family is that in spite of poverty and the uncertainties of life, we will be all right if we hold on to each other, and we hold on to God together.

I never realized how hard the economy was until I talked to Santa Claus over the phone. I asked him how Rudolph his red-nosed reindeer was. "Oh, delicious!" was his reply.

These are difficult times for many of us. In fact, a recent SWS survey said that because of inflation and unemployment this year, only 64 percent of Filipinos (from 82 percent in 2002, and 77 percent in 2003) were looking forward to a merry Christmas. However the survey also said that 2 out of 3 Filipinos are still generally hopeful.

And what makes the Filipino happiest, especially at Christmas? The family, and just some food at the table. That goes to show that we, as a nation, with all our misery and broken dreams, still value the family.

And what is keeping our families intact and what keeps us hopeful through it all? Certainly not our brand of politics, but our faith and our belief that we will survive.

My sister Bing shared with me her experience with her students who were asked to write a letter to Santa Claus. Some kids

asked for toys, some asked for money, or for the health of their parents. But the most lonely letter was from a little girl who wrote: "Dear Santa, don't bother to come. We don't celebrate Christmas at home..."

How many homes no longer celebrate or feel Christmas just because there's no peace at home, or someone just died, or someone is seriously ill, or someone is causing problems at home? Or simply because they have no home?

An inspiring insight comes from the *pamilya de corton*, the family on wheels. Actually it is depressing to see a whole family living together in a push cart, gathering trash, salvaging whatever food from the garbage together. They spend the night in whatever safe, dark nook or corner they can find in the city, exposed to all the elements. What is inspiring about them is that they are together, and they stay together through it all. Somehow, they manage, they laugh, they go on, because though they have nothing, they have each other. Far better than those who have everything, but have no one.

I had a Christmas moment when I celebrated Mass in an isolated Army camp somewhere in Caliraya for the 1st Infantry Battalion headed by Col. Tristram Kison. Somehow, the Christmas message of peace and hope offered some comfort and meaning to these foot soldiers who risk life and limb every day, especially in their rescue and relief operations in Quezon during the recent typhoons. Many a tear fell when we prayed in silence and allowed God to em-

brace us under that beautiful December sky.

Another Christmas moment was when I had a healing session for the patients at a public hospital in Legazpi City. There amid the sick, the infirm and the wounded, I experienced the world to which the Savior came some 2,000 years ago, a world which still needs so much peace, healing and redemption.

On a personal note, our family experienced a Christmas moment when my cousins, the Galicias—Ed, Roly and Linda—arrived from the United States to spend Christmas in the Philippines with their teenage children who have never seen the Philippines before. It was Ate Linda's wish that they come together. Ate Linda is a stage-4 cancer survivor. She also survived the death of her eldest son some three years ago. It was a beautiful moment to remember and to be grateful. Through it all, I was so happy to see the value of prayer, integrity, charity, which our parents and grandparents have taught us, so alive in each one of us. Yes, if there is prayer in a family, there is hope, there is unity and there is strength.

Pedro: What is *buli*?

Juan: It's some kind of a skin disease.

Pedro: Oh, I see. That's why the doctor told my friend that he will treat his left leg and right leg. Both legs!

Dear friends, remember that life is not just body, not just soul, but body and soul. Please always see, always provide, always consider in yourself and in others, the body and the soul, the material and the spiritual.

Here's wishing you all a truly blessed Christmas, and a better New Year, in all aspects, in Jesus' name Amen!

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, thank You for giving us hope. Thank You for giving us meaning. Thank You for Christmas. Amen.

Strength and fortitude

REVELLE

Ramon J. Farolan



IT'S been more than two weeks since deadly typhoons hit the provinces of Aurora and Quezon along the eastern seaboard of the country. More recent tragedies have taken over the front pages of our newspapers, replacing the stories of death and destruction brought about by "Violeta," "Winnie" and "Yoyong." It is too soon to forget their victims. As the mornings get colder and we put on warmer clothing and partake of the holiday fare, let us keep in mind that they continue to need our help and assistance.

Here is a survivor's story. For most of the folks in Barangay Ilog in Infanta, Quezon, typhoon "Winnie" was just another weather disturbance similar to others which they had to deal with from time to time. The only difference was that perhaps this one was a little bit late in the year. Already reeling from the aftermath of an earlier typhoon ("Violeta"), the last few days of November were unusually wet and windy. But Erliza G. and her husband were not too worried about the downpour. For one thing, compared to other houses in the barangay, theirs was semi-concrete and had withstood stronger storms in the past.

On Nov. 29, rain started falling since early morning and continued through the day. By evening, Erliza became aware of eerie, howling sounds as the downpour grew heavier. At 7 p.m., the waters began to rise as the strange sounds became louder. By 11 p.m., the rampaging flood waters had reached the second floor of the house, forcing the family, including their two daughters, five-year old Mary Cecille and a nine-month old infant, Neneng, to climb up to the roof. Erliza cradled the baby while her husband held on tightly to the older child.

In the darkness that enveloped them as they struggled to stay dry, Erliza could not make out her surroundings and felt the house shaking as though hit by an earthquake. Within minutes, the flood waters had swallowed up the whole house and the family members were swept away by the raging torrent of water spilling from the high

ground above them.

To her horror, Erliza could barely make out the figure of her husband with their daughter being taken away by the onrushing waters. She was fully aware now what was causing the eerie sounds: floating logs being swept away by the floods. For a while, she found herself shouting for help, but in the dark, her voice was drowned out by the wind and the sound of falling rain. Soon, mother and baby were all by themselves.

Fighting fear and panic, Erliza clutched her baby even tighter as they were carried away by the waters, now gathering more strength by the minute. In her frantic search for something to cling to, she was able to get hold of a floating banana trunk. Holding Neneng with one arm and gripping the trunk with the other, Erliza struggled to keep her baby above water but the strong currents gradually weakened her. To make the situation even more difficult, a piece of galvanized iron swept by and hit her on the right hip. The sharp pain caused her to momentarily loosen her grip on the infant and in those few seconds, she lost the baby to the swirling water around her.

She kept praying, crying and shouting for help. But no one heard her or no one was around. Weakened by her frantic efforts to locate her child, she soon lost consciousness.

Erliza was carried away more than a kilometer from their place in Barangay Ilog.

When she came to, it was almost morning. A nun found her and brought her to Claro Hospital in Real, where she was reunited with her husband. She had a gaping wound in her right hip;

her baby was found dead among the debris and Mary Cecille was missing. After a while, a PAF helicopter airlifted her to Villamor Air Base for more intensive care of her wound.

Recuperating at the Air Force Hospital, Erliza becomes teary-eyed each time she recalls her harrowing experience. But she does so for all who care to listen, perhaps hoping to elicit some information about her missing daughter. She continues to believe that she is safe somewhere.

In the forefront of rescue and relief operations at the height of the disaster were elements of the Armed Forces which were immediately deployed in this great humanitarian effort.

Using call sign "Angel 890," an Air Force chopper piloted by Capt. Noel Pineda and Capt. Gerardo Naldoza braved bad weather conditions, a 200-ft cloud ceiling and 30-knot surface winds to air drop food supplies to people stranded in different areas in Real, Infanta and General Nakar.

Army units led by junior officers like 2nd Lt. Victor Kitong and 2nd Lt. Allan Thia moved on foot through driving rain and mud over long distances to help rescue civilians at Dingalan. Some 100 persons were transferred to safe areas before their houses were completely destroyed by falling rocks and logs.

Philippine Navy vessels navigated in darkness surrounded by floating logs which endangered the safety of the ships. They brought relief supplies as well as earth-moving equipment to clear roads and fix bridges.

The United States armed forces deployed personnel, backed by helicopters and cargo planes which airlifted food and medicine to areas rendered inaccessible by the landslides.

We salute the men in uniform for a magnificent performance. As we enjoy the holiday season in the warmth and comfort of our homes, let us not forget our less fortunate brothers. May the Prince of Peace remain in our hearts as we welcome another year.

Re-thinking Santa

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



ONE recent evening, while we were driving by our village gate, we espied the huge resin Santa that stands guard over it. Our daughter wondered out loud why, when our house is crammed with my belated collection every year, we don't use more Santas in our Christmas décor. In fact, the only Santas among our holiday trimmings are a few miniature "mutant" Santas my husband won in a 7-11 raffle.

I explained that I never really believed in the Santa myth, since my parents couldn't be bothered to go through the whole gift-giving charade, nonchalantly signing their gift cards with "Love from Papa and Mama." I followed their example when I had children of my own, but that didn't stop the two of them from imbibing the myth, and each year we would find a "letter to Santa" taped on their bedroom door, invariably containing a gift wish list, topped by that one Christmas when our son asked Santa to "give me my own room."

And that's the one thing about Santa that has bothered me all these years. Santa has become a symbol not of generosity and magnanimity, as the story of St. Nicholas is meant to be, but an icon of the worst aspects of the holiday season: materialism, excess and greed.

Maybe that's why I collect manger scenes, being my own individual way of righting the skewed priorities of Christmas as we know it today. Instead of focusing on the antics of a fat old man in a red suit delivering gifts to children on Christmas Day, we should return the spotlight to the origins of this Christian holiday, the birth of the Son of God, who chose to be born to a poor couple in the humblest of places, sharing his Nativity not with the rich and powerful but with shepherds, farm animals and angels.

Beside that compelling story and powerful symbol, I think Jolly Old St. Nick pales in comparison: Who needs Santa, right?

IT was while watching "Polar Express" that I finally understood the need for Santa Claus.

For those who have yet to see the film, it's the animated version of a children's book about a boy, on the cusp of adolescence, who's starting to doubt the existence of Santa Claus.

Despite the signs telling him otherwise, the boy still wants to believe, especially since his younger sister is an ardent believer.

On the night before Christmas, the boy is awakened from sleep by the arrival of the "Polar Express," a train managed by a crusty conductor (Tom Hanks, who also voices the boy and other characters) that brings children to the North Pole for an extra-special treat: meeting Santa face-to-face and paying a visit to Christmas town.

The filmmakers said they wanted the animated movie to retain the "look" and feel of the book, which became a contemporary classic upon its publication. And indeed "Polar Express" brings to life every facet of the Santa myth, answering every question that ever occurred to every child thinking about Santa Claus and his complex operations.

How does Santa "keep" his list? With the help of an army of elves who keep a computerized data bank of the world's children. How are all the gifts prepared and gift-wrapped? With an assembly line that ends in a humongous funnel that drops the gifts into Santa's giant sleigh. And how does Santa know what gifts to give? By reading into the minds and hearts of all those who believe.

THAT was when it struck me. Santa is a Christmas story for a secular world. We all need our traditions and children especially need a back-story to tell them why, on this one day of the year, we celebrate by getting together, sharing a meal and exchanging gifts.

Santa is especially popular in the United States, in a society where people of all races, eth-

nicities, faiths and beliefs strive to live together in harmony and to unite around a common culture despite their many differences and religions. Santa is thus a unifying factor, a "harmless" symbol of holiday cheer and generosity who doesn't provoke religious questions or offend religious sensibilities.

Though Christmas is and should be primarily a religious celebration, it is now no longer exclusively the domain of Christians. It has been commercialized and homogenized, true, but it has also served to bring the entire world together in good cheer and company at least one day a year.

Santa Claus, then, is a symbol around whom young people, and people young-at-heart, can accept without question or rancor, a myth easily accessible and acceptable, a symbol against whom we can bounce off our deepest aspirations, yearnings and hopes. It isn't the jolly old man's fault that he has come to mean wish lists and gifts to children, who are simply responding to the signals sent by the adults around them.

Maybe there can be room for Santa in my home at Christmas, after all.

EVEN the most ardent of Santa fans, though must find this message, sent to me by TV director Ida Vargas, funny and enlightening.

"According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December. Female reindeer retain their antlers until after they give birth in the spring."

"Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, EVERY single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl. We should've known... ONLY women would be able to drag a fat-ass man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost."

And that would be, of course, because the female reindeer would have first bothered to read the maps before setting off, and when they strayed, they would not have been ashamed to ask directions from utter strangers.

Religion, cinema and politics

OUTSIDE the church where his remains lay in state, Fernando Poe Jr.'s movies were being played for the common folk who lined up and waited for hours to take a last quick look at their idol. No scene more graphically captures the substance of Filipino culture. An FPJ movie has the same effect on his fans as a religious experience: the cleansing of the spirit and release from bondage. The actor has more in common with a prophet than with a politician.

They came not only to bid him goodbye. They were there also to thank him for his kindness and to ask his spirit to continue to watch over them. In this manner do we, as Filipinos, accept the enigma of death. Death prompts us not only to recall where we have come from, but also to ask where we are going. The resolution of death's mystery constitutes the core of every religion.

Some observers have compared FPJ's funeral with that of Ninoy Aquino's in 1983. The crowds that attended the two events were comparable, FPJ and Ninoy were both heroic figures, but the similarity ends there. Ninoy's funeral was a political event that acquired religious meanings. FPJ's funeral, in contrast, was a religious moment that acquired political undertones. Ninoy, as a political symbol, gained in stature from the spiritualization of his death. His greatness has survived the failure of Edsa I. FPJ, as a cultural icon, stood to lose everything from the politicization of his death. His star would have dimmed if his funeral had sparked an Edsa IV.

A glance at the depreciation of politics in the eyes of our people would be enough to explain this phenomenon. So low has the image of the politician in our society sunk that hardly anyone who ventures into the world of politics today can hope to leave it with his name intact. It was for a good reason that Fernando Poe Jr. was a reluctant politician.

Some people have read political meanings into the passing reference made by Susan Roces to the way FPJ was unfairly treated during the presidential elections. But these statements must be taken

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David



In the context of the media interviews in which they were given. She was asked what she thought of the government's plan to honor her late husband by conferring on him a posthumous National Artist award and arranging for his burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayan. With admirable restraint, she questioned the integrity of this offer by comparing it with the foul manner in which her husband was portrayed during the election by the same administration that was now proposing to honor him. This great woman was determined not to allow her husband's death to be the instrument of anybody's political agenda.

Aware that these statements could easily be misreported as the launching of a political bid, Ms. Roces stressed that she had no political ambition and would not run for any political office. But she also said that she would continue to champion the cause of the poor on whose behalf her husband had sought the presidency. This advocacy may inevitably cast her in a political role, but I believe her when she says that politics, as we know it in this country, is farthest from her nature.

If some politicians of the administration and the opposition thought that the grieving admirers of FPJ could be transformed into a raging mob and re-routed from the cemetery to the Palace, they were mistaken. They know nothing of the spiritual nature of mourning in our culture, a purgation rather than a loading of the emotions.

The Arroyo administration should be ashamed of itself for reacting the way it did during the funeral. Instead of maintaining a respectful silence in the face of the collective mourning for a fallen

warrior, it called in the Armed Forces to fortify and defend the Palace against the assault of an imagined enemy. The justice secretary, Raol Gonzalez, appeared on television to issue a warning against acts of sedition, forgetting that the Arroyo regime he serves was installed in 2001 by such acts of sedition. The state would be constrained to defend itself, he intoned. So it will—against the sovereign people. The secretary personifies the pathetic paranoia of a government that, because of its own duplicity, has become fearful of

If this government falls, it will not be because of the anger of FPJ's grieving supporters. It will collapse from the weight of its own corruption, hypocrisy and incompetence. And, yes, from its own fears. President Macapagal-Arroyo would have learned nothing if all she saw at the funeral were the anti-government messages that some of the actor's admirers wrote on banners and Manila paper. For the real message of the funeral was the deep affection that the simple folk lavished upon the man they regarded as a hero. If she had watched Susan Roces during all this time, she might also have learned a lesson on what it means to speak from the heart.

How sad that our politics should be discontinuous from our people's faith. How tragic that our nation's leaders should be the opposite of the movie world's heroes. Should one still wonder why our voters try to repair this weakness by turning to preachers and movie actors for leadership? We know, of course, that the solution does not lie in this, nor in the vain attempt to discredit preachers and actors who enter politics. The solution, reason tells us, lies alone in the urgent task of reforming and elevating politics itself.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the writer Judith Butler asked: "What, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war?" It is a question we might ask ourselves in this season of tragedy and grace.

Comments to davidinquirer@yahoo.com

Brown folks dreaming of a white Christmas

DESPITE six decades of independence from the Americans, too many Filipinos seem still mired in what are basically colonial attitudes and values. Of course, there have been, over the years, some soul-searching and a harking back to traditional native values among nationalists and historians. However, the sense one gets about the aspirations and attitudes of the general populace—particularly among the migrant workers abroad—is that there is little, if any, real pride of country in the ordinary Filipino. Sadly, there seems to be a tendency to deny one's roots and instead to display a deep-seated desire to behave like—if not try to become—Americans.

COMMENTARY

Isabel T. Escoda

This fact was brought home to me at a recent pre-Christmas event in Hong Kong. The Philippine Consulate had imported over two dozen parols from Pampanga which were set up at Chater Garden in the city's business and hotel district of Central. Some Hong Kong officials were invited to the inauguration, along with other dignitaries and resident Filipinos, and before the parol lighting took place, a combo provided rather loud jazzed-up music, trotting out the perennially popular (for Pinoys) and totally inappropriate Western songs like "White Christmas" and "Winter Wonderland," among others while people chatted and milled around the drinks and lumpia.

After the arrival of Secretary for Home Affairs Patrick Ho, who, along with Consul General Corazon Belmonte Jover, was supposed to turn on the switch that would light the lanterns, the consul gave a brief talk about the meaning of the traditional parol in the context of a Filipino Christmas. He responded by remarking on the great service provided by Filipinos who comprise the largest foreign community in the territory, the majority being domestic workers.

Then both officials flicked the switch to turn on the lights in the lanterns, at which point two nightclub performers (a male-female duo) started to belt out, with a maximum of lung power, a jazzed-up version of "Christmastime in the City." The extra high-decibel sound system was such that someone remarked it could probably be heard as far away as Wanchai district and beyond.

The screeching duo—one a gaudily dressed Pinay whose singing style was a mishmash of Tina Turner and Madonna, and an ageing ponytailed man (purportedly the most popular Pinoy singer in Hong Kong)—belted out their numbers with such abandon, passersby were seen staring, probably wondering about the source of the racket.

Instead of giving true meaning to the occasion by presenting native carols, the musicians carried on displaying a high degree of tastelessness by performing syncopated versions of Western Christmas songs which lent a totally discordant—and inappropriate—note to the proceedings.

Few seemed to notice the Hong Kong officials smiling gamely at the ear-drum-shattering noise ("music" would be the wrong word). It made one wonder if they looked tolerantly at Pinoys as incorrigible children. The forced merry-making could only reinforce the perception among many foreigners that Pinoys not only lack nationalism and have no qualms about engaging in ersatz behavior, they never seem to grow up.

Thanks to the efforts of a small group of longtime Pinoy residents in Hong Kong like myself, a more solemn event will take place on Dec. 30 this year. After obtaining permission from the Hong Kong Historical and Antiquities Board, a plaque will be put up in a lane alongside that engineering wonder, the Central-to-Midlevels escalator, marking the place where Jose Rizal once lived.

When our national hero arrived in Hong Kong after his European sojourn, he sent for his family, which managed to obtain permission to leave Manila from the Spanish colonial authorities. It was at No. 2 Rednaxela Terrace, from December 1891 to June 1892, where the Rizal family lived—quite happily enjoying the freedom of the British colony, according to the late British historian Austin Coates. Coates wrote that the oddly named lane was the handiwork of a Chinese sign-painter who was given the name "Alexander" to paint on the hillside. Not knowing English, he put the letters the wrong way around—hence, Rednaxela.

Over the past five years, there have been two other plaques set up as a result of our requests—one in Central's D'Aguilar Street, showing where Rizal had his medical clinic, and the other on Morrison Hill Road in Wanchai where the first Philippine flag was sewn which was later taken to Kawit, Cavite, for Aguinado's declaration of independence in June 1898.

Thankfully, at the Dec. 30 ceremony in Hong Kong, there will be no need for Pinoys to act like little brown Americans by displaying the talent to replicate Western singers. As one British writer noted about the prevalence of Filipino musicians around Asia, "They've no originality, but they're wonderful imitators of every Western singing style you can name."

A sad commentary indeed. It would probably make Rizal turn in his grave.

Journalist Isabel T. Escoda is a longtime Hong Kong resident who has written the books "Letters From Hong Kong" and "Hong Kong Postscript."

THEY SAID

Give and take

"We protected what we needed to protect and conceded where we needed to concede."
—Japan's Agriculture Minister Yoshinobu Shimamura on the trade agreement between his country and the Philippines

Symbol of shrinkage

"The sampaguita is our national flower, but it has become a symbol of our shrinking capacities."
—Social Welfare Secretary Corason "Dinky" Soliman, on the government's plan to give alternative sources of income to mothers of child vendors

Mad

"I'm going nuts, I'm angry over why these killings are happening."
—Philippine National Police Director General Edgar Aglipay, denouncing the killing of journalists

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TALK of the TOWN

What happened to waste segregation?

THIS Yuletide season, the volume of garbage is expected to go up as Filipinos celebrate the birth of the Messiah with gift giving, parties, reunions, *noche buena* and fireworks.

Today, a day after Christmas, garbage bins overflow with discarded wrapping paper, cardboard boxes, food scraps, plastic cups, soda and beer cans, cellophane and other kinds of refuse—biodegradable and non-biodegradable.

Most households and business establishments do not put biodegradable waste in plastic bags separate from the non-biodegradable waste, although the three-year-old Solid Waste Management Law, or Republic Act No. 9003 requires segregation.

People do not segregate garbage, a violation of the Solid Waste Management Law,

because of the dearth of information on the law.

People must start separating biodegradable from non-biodegradable waste because the proliferation of dumps across the country threatens their health. Dumps can contaminate the water table and breed disease.

There is no need for dumps if people recycle and segregate. Fifty-percent of waste is biodegradable and can be composted to fertilize gardens and fields. The other 50 percent is non-biodegradable but 30 percent of that can be turned into hollow blocks or decorative pavement. The remaining 20 percent, which includes hazardous wastes, can also be recycled.

So segregation and recycling make sense.

For a change, give plants this season

By Gloria Estenzo Ramos

An nine-year-old scavenger, eluding out a living was buried alive by an avalanche of garbage in the dump of a city in Metro Manila. Who must answer for his death?

His parents?

The barangay and the city, for allowing children and adults entry to the hazardous open dump? The dump is by itself prohibited.

The President, for not ensuring that health and environmental laws are implemented by local government units (LGUs)?

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, for not exercising its mandate to close the hazardous site?

Or us, the consumers, who throw away used materials with no care at all where they end up?

Have we become a generation of uncaring and irresponsible dwellers of this planet? The effects of a garbage crisis are palpable—the carrying capacity of landfills is prematurely pushed to the limit, the search for possible landfill sites confront the LGUs and people oppose the idea of a dumping ground in their neighborhood.

Ground water

The skin diseases afflicting scavengers and clogged esteros are a daily sight, the dying marine life as a result of indiscriminate dumping of plastics and toxic waste is a reality, the deteriorating quality of ground waters, and the barren forest lands. The list goes on and on.

Oh, yes, we do have environmental laws enacted to stem the tide of ecological destruction brought about by man's greed and indifference. But, as environmental advocate and author Antonio A. Oposa Jr. says these laws languish in the "sickbed of non-compliance."

The Solid Waste Management Law or Republic Act No. 9003 institutionalized waste segregation and reduction among Filipinos. It affirms the rights of citizens to hold any person, government agencies and public officials accountable for the violation of or failure to implement the law.

LGUs are responsible for waste collection, storage and disposal because the barangay and other local leaders are presumably in close touch with the problems, needs and desires of their constituents.

Criminal liability

Sadly, three years after RA 9003's effectivity, waste segregation is not practiced at all in most offices, public places and homes, except in few model barangays and cities like Barangay Luz in Cebu City and Dumaguete. The people are not aware that by littering, dumping, burning solid waste and not segregating, they are incurring criminal liability.

Ordinary citizens do not hold the monopoly of transgression, however. Public servants—in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and even constitutional bodies—defy the law.

There is a dearth of information and lack of awareness about the law. Worse, violators go scot-free. No thanks to the indifference of the government, people and business sector. The stakeholders do not care to understand the law and the respective roles each play in its implementation.

How do we make each indi-

vidual aware of the ecological time bomb that is ticking and of his or her role in preventing the explosion? We must confront and respond to this challenge quickly. Now.

It is high time we focus seriously on our responsibilities in caring for our community and country. We must move our government officials into action, call the attention of the violators, and be involved in the awareness campaign. If everything else does not work, people can exercise the option to exact compliance from government officials and sue for accountability like what some lawyers did in a southern city.

We are now in the midst of the holiday season that usually finds people go overdrive in shopping for gifts for loved ones. The mountains of discarded goods, trinkets and other consumables will predictably ensue. For a change, why not give creative recycled items instead? Or better still, give a gift of life—a seedling, plants or even seeds. It is not only economical but also ecologically sustaining.

The bottom line is—each one must reduce the garbage and conserve the Earth's resources. Let us do our share for Nature, for planet Earth, for our survival and for the children yet unborn.

(Ramos is the deputy chair for the Visayas of the National Environmental Action Team—Integrated Bar of the Philippines.)

Landfills are unnecessary if we recycle

By Joey C. Papa and Ana V. Papa

Hheavy rains flooded Metro Manila and adjoining northern provinces last August, killing people and causing heavy damage to property and the environment. Garbage was pinpointed as the major culprit.

As the Christmas holidays will again generate more garbage, let us take note of Republic Act No. 9003, which mandates ecological solid waste management and closure of dumps by February 2006.

The word *maka-kalikasan* is the heart and soul of the law.

The realistic objectives of ecological solid waste management are waste reduction, re-use, sorting and segregation, recycling and composting.

It deals with waste at the source, in households, or at least in the barangay Ecology Center (Eco-Center) or Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Therefore, there is no need for dumps and landfills that eat up hundreds of thousands of hectares, pollute the surroundings and cause catastrophes as the Payatas dump did in 2000.

Dumps

To date, there are some 800 open dumps, more than a hundred controlled dumps (e.g., in Payatas, Rodriguez, Tanza and Navotas), and four "sanitary" landfills. Still, more than a hundred are being proposed.

The eco-center system or MRF classifies solid wastes as differentiated, say from effluents, in order to effectively carry out segregation.

Biodegradable (*nabubulok*) waste includes kitchen, yard or garden, animal and human waste, toilet wipes, sanitary pads and diapers (sans the plastic covering). Separate these from non-biodegradable (*di nabubulok*) waste, which in-



ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADESPAGE DESIGN BY ERINIE SAMBO

Garbage fast facts

- In Metro Manila, about 5,900 tons of garbage or 0.5 kg per person is being generated daily
- For areas outside Metro Manila, the waste generation rate ranges from 0.3 to about 0.5 kg per person a day
- Residents of urban centers produce between 0.5 and 0.7 kg a day, while those in rural areas generate 0.3 kg per person a day
- Average composition of solid

wastes in the Philippines (percent by weight): Yard and field waste 33.5 percent; Fines and inert: 12.9 percent; Wood: 11.5 percent; Food waste: 11 percent; Paper and cardboard: 10.2 percent; Plastic and petroleum products: 9.8 percent; Textiles: 4.1 percent; Metals: 3.3 percent; Glass: 1.9 percent; Leather and rubber: 1.8 percent

- Majority of Metro Manila's

dumps will reach capacity this year.

- More than 4,300 waste pickers work at the dumps.
- Number of open dumps nationwide: 800
- Number of controlled dumps: more than a hundred including Payatas
- Number of sanitary landfills: 4

SOURCES: NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMISSION AND BANGON KALIKASAN MOVEMENT

cludes metal, glass, plastic, rubber, bonded or blended composites (such as juice packs), and conditional materials of biodegradable origin but which, if clean and dry, may be considered non-biodegradable (such as used paper or cardboard, fiber or cloth, hair, leather, hides or skins of animals, bones, shells, ceramics, rocks, wood, rattan and bamboo).

Composting at home

With an eco-center system in place in an enlightened barangay, biowaste is composted at home (in sacks or other containers and covered with soil, coconut or similar materials, with enough heat from the sun, aera-

tion and some moisture or inoculants that also help prevent foul odor). Biowaste can also be deposited in a clean container and brought to the eco-center for composting.

Non-biowaste is cleaned, dried and set aside for the cart-pushing junk collectors or brought to the eco-center, where the recyclers or junk dealers can go and take their pick.

About 50 percent of waste generated is biodegradable and may be composted to rehabilitate degraded soils or enhance gardening. Of the other 50 percent, which is non-biodegradable, some 30 percent may be re-used or recycled immediately.

ly—including so-called residuals that junk shops don't usually buy such as candy wrappers and seemingly useless discarded materials but which can be turned into decorative pavement or hollow blocks and other construction materials.

The remaining 20 percent, which includes hazardous, infectious and toxic waste, should be treated first and then recycled. Consider then the reduction in raw materials extraction. The municipality or city could take up responsibility for this task from the barangay.

Barangays Linomor (Isabela), Panoytoy (Samar), Holy Spirit (Quezon City), Bued

(Pangasinan) and Sta. Cruz (Batangas) were recently chosen as the best five model villages for eco-waste management.

Barangay Tuktukan declined to join because the municipal dump was right in its area.

On Aug. 23, however, it finally got this dump closed. Encouraged by the support of Bulacan Gov. Josefina dela Cruz in coordination with the municipality of Guiguinto and Bangon Kalikasan Movement, local officials led by Barangay Captain Romeo Tonog and Councilor Nora Santos renewed the community's commitment to waste segregation plus, this time, composting at the household level, segregated collection using three tri-bikes and segregated destination in a modest eco-center.

The council then passed a resolution to close the dump. Mayor Ambrosio Cruz agreed after getting the concurrence of his 13 other barangay captains, who must now put up their own eco-centers. Barangay Tuktukan, with a population of 10,000, shows that home- and barangay-based eco-waste management through segregation, recycling and composting works.

(The Papas are founding members of Bangon Kalikasan Movement. Email: bangon_kalikasan@skynet.net)

Some restos now into segregation

By Albert Magalang

The production of goods based on new materials has created a problem: mountains of wastes that are not easily decomposed. Instead, they generate and build up harmful gases and liquids and voluminous solid wastes.

They become not only eyesores but major threats to health and ecological balance. Their disposal also becomes a source of social conflict because communities are critical of various waste handling and disposal facilities.

Quite a number of environmental laws have been enacted in the country. The most recent of which is Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, which calls for the institutionalization of a national program that will manage the control, transfer, transport, processing and disposal of solid waste in the country.

Model

One of the key features of the law is segregation at source. The scheme has been taught by several nongovernmental organizations even prior to the enactment of RA 9003. Several communities have adopted the scheme and established composting and recovery facilities in their area. Some have become successful. Others need more assistance. Those that succeeded were recognized in the recent National Search for the Model Barangay in Eco-Solid Waste Management.

The private sector (specifically the quick service restaurants) has also adopted waste segregation.

The government, in collaboration with several NGOs, is pushing for the full implementation of RA 9003. Technical assistance is being provided to LGUs to help them implement the law.

(Magalang is the executive director of the National Solid Waste Management Commission.)

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GMA vows pursuit of log poachers

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

GENERAL TINIO, Nueva Ecija—On Christmas Eve, President Macapagal-Arroyo was unforgiving. To illegal loggers and illegal cutters of timber, that is.

"Masigasig ang pagkilas ng pamahalaan laban sa kanila (The government is really determined in its move against them)," she told a press briefing here Friday afternoon.

In about three months, she said she would be given an account of what had been done about prosecuting illegal loggers and timber poachers and in stopping illegal logging.

"By the third week of March, I am expecting reports of many good accomplishments of the Task Force on Illegal Logging headed by Gen. (Victor) Corpus," she said.

"As you can see now, the task force is conducting raids on sawmills and has been running after suspected illegal loggers. We are really determined to punish them."

The President ordered military and police officials to arrest those transporting illegally-cut logs. "If they are suspected to be illegally-cut logs, make the necessary arrest," she told military and police officials present during the briefing.

She said those caught trans-

porting illegal logs could be arrested even without the presence of Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel.

Under present regulations, only DENR personnel can confiscate illegal logs and charge their owners in court.

Ms Arroyo earlier made an aerial survey of the destruction caused by the recent typhoons and flash floods in Nueva Ecija.

She said she was very saddened by what she saw here and in Dingalan, Aurora, when she visited the area on Thursday.

She said she was aghast to learn that the forest denudation in the area was not caused only by logging companies but also by people engaged in timber poaching.

Timber poaching, which is carried out by people paid by financiers engaged in illegal logging, is called "carabao logging."

As the President appeared unforgiving to illegal loggers and timber poachers, she showed motherly concern for victims of the recent calamities here and in the Bicol region.



A TREE is left alone in the vastness of the destruction wrought on Barangay Ilog in Infanta, Quezon, by logging.

REM ZAMORA

In Gabaldon town which she also visited, she assured the victims of government help in rebuilding their homes and farms. She said the government had started relief operations on Dec. 15 and would next give assistance to the victims.

The President told the victims that she visited them on Christmas Eve not only to bring Christmas cheer but also to extend the message of hope for a better tomorrow.

"May bagong pag-asa, bagong buhay, at tutulongan kayo para sa

pagtatayo ng bagong bahay (There's new hope, new life, and you will be given assistance for the building of your houses)," she said in her brief message in Gabaldon.

Asked about her reaction to surveys and comments on the sad

state of affairs, particularly about the economy, she said what is happening today is a result of decades of too much reliance of the country on debts which are now being repaid.

She said the country is deep in debt and cannot fully move on.

Baguio cooks up gimmicks to attract tourists

BAGUIO CITY—Meningococemia has probably driven the final nail on Baguio tourism's coffin, at least for 2004. But city residents will not take it lying down.

Boat rentals at Burnham Lake, one of the most visited spots of this 95-year-old American-built city, have dropped from P60 an hour to P60 for a "one-to-sawa (until you drop)" package.

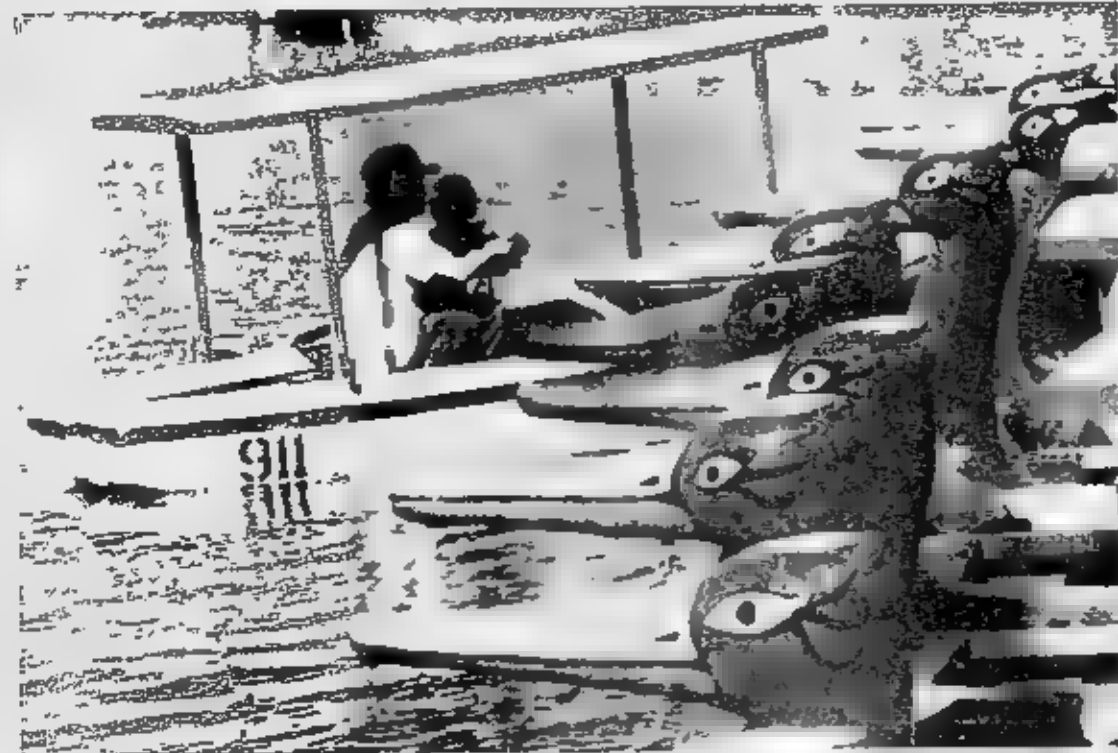
"We want visitors to feel at home again. Burnham Park is where lovers meet, where marriages are made, where children (of landlocked provinces in Northern Luzon) first encounter boats," Efren, a commercial boat rental pitchman, said.

Near the lake, enterprising commercial photographers have been drawing domestic tourists from Mt. Province, La Union and Pangasinan to a three-year-old St. Bernard named Bertie, who amiably poses with children for P60 a shot.

Ernie, the dog's owner, said Bertie has been a profitable innovation for Burnham Park enterprises, which have been suffering a slump since the Baguio Flower Festival last year.

A Department of Tourism report showed tourist arrivals dropped by 22 percent from January to November this year. But it is a trend that has been plaguing the summer capital since 2000, according to Jovy Ganongan, a DOT Cordillera tourism officer.

Hotels reported only 25,000 bookings in November, compared to the 69,000 bookings in 75 facilities in November last year, DOT records showed.



BOATS await tourists at Burnham Lake in Baguio City. Operators are trying to attract visitors by charging P60 for a boat ride for an unlimited period compared to P60 per hour before.

NORTHERN LUZON

Most guests, who were attending conventions in the city, backed out when the Department of Health confirmed a meningococemia outbreak that had claimed 11 lives as of this week.

The decline of tourist arrivals has been attributed to Baguio's urban decay.

"There's nothing new to offer tourists (except the cool weather), and our parks still need some sprucing up," Ganongan said.

City Hall employees admit that the city's routine upkeep has been obstructed by financial

and operational problems. Baguio's major traffic light grids are not working, compounding the heavy traffic jams that regularly hit downtown.

Burnham Lake only started drawing back tourists in September, after Mayor Braulio Yaranon complained to the Department of Public Works and Highways that it had connected a sewer pipe to the lake's rainwater drain.

Meningococemia has hastened the city's plunging visitor numbers for November, when tourism normally picks up,

Ganongan said. Baguio's most profitable tourism periods are during the Christmas holidays and Holy Week.

Based on tourism booking reports from 60 percent of Baguio's hotels and inns, tourism had consistently slid down, except in April, she said.

Cordillera recorded 620,000 tourists from January and November, a far cry from the region's 812,000 tourists from January to December in 2003. Vincent Cabrera, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

41, mostly kids, hurt in firecracker blasts in Cebu, Iloilo, Leyte

CEBU CITY—At least 41 persons, including children, were brought to different hospitals in Cebu, Iloilo and Leyte due to blast injuries during the Christmas revelry.

Of the number, 38 were from three cities in Cebu—Cebu, Mandaue and Lapulapu. Two were in Tacloban City, Leyte, and one was in Iloilo.

Among those hurt were Diego Vergara, 38, and his two-year-old son, Nikko, who were brought to the Cebu City Medical Center for blast injuries in their hands.

Vergara, of Barangay Labangon in Cebu City, said his son picked up a lighted firecracker while playing in their yard on Christmas Eve.

Vergara said he was trying to take the firecracker from his son when it exploded.

A staffer of the Department of Health in Central Visayas said they could not tell if the number of blast victims in Cebu had increased or decreased because their office was still gathering data from other hospitals.

In Iloilo, Jane Andrea Gale, 2, was brought to the Western Visayas Medical Center for treatment of bruises she suffered after a firecracker exploded near her.

In Iloilo, only one case was reported, compared to the six blast injury cases treated at the government-run hospital in the previous year's Christmas Day celebration.

In Leyte, two blast victims were brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center in Tacloban

City. They were Mark Jay Cadion, 12, of Tacloban, and Julio Hinay, 25, of Mahaplag town.

Ligaya Acosta, DOH information officer in Eastern Visayas, said the number was lower compared to the seven blast victims reported last year.

A policeman and a member of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology were held for firing their guns.

PO1 Roy Jaime, a member of the Mobile Patrol Group, was arrested by his colleagues for firing his gun at around 4 a.m. in Upper Bacayan, Cebu City.

The MPG also arrested JO1 Ceferino Somoza, 27, and a BJMP member in Consolacion town in Cebu, for firing at the back of the Guadalupe Church in Cebu City at about 3:49 a.m. yesterday.

The husband of a retired police woman was killed after he accidentally shot himself on Christmas Eve in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

Diosdado Bedonia had an argument with his wife, retired SPO4 Nelly Bedonia, at about 10:30 p.m. inside their house at Curva Hagnaya in Barangay Tabun-ac.

Nelly locked herself in their room. Apparently irked, Diosdado tried to open the door by hitting the doorknob with the butt of a .30-cal. M2 carbine rifle. The firearm went off and the bullet hit Diosdado in the head. *Shunnex Napaltacan, Nestor R Burgos Jr., Joey A. Gabieta and Carla R Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Judge's Xmas break leaves chaos between workers, contractor

ATOK, Benguet—A judge's untimely Christmas break has left residents furious as disgraced employees of a contractor for the rehabilitation of the Halsema Highway are free to get pieces of heavy equipment here.

Judge Benigno Galacagac of the regional trial court in La Trinidad town went on Christmas leave on Dec. 15 even as former employees and subcontractors of Francis Gutierrez Construction Corp.

(FGCC) filed separate third-party claims for the equipment left by the firm.

The owner of the property in Sayangan here, where the pieces of equipment were left, also asked for remuneration of the debt left by FGCC.

But because Galacagac failed to act on their claims, the FGCC was able to get equipment from the stockyard of the Daewoo Engineering and Construction Corp.

in Buguias, Benguet.

Angry residents set up bonfires on the tracks of FGCC and threw stones at their trailers, but the Manila-based firm was still able to bring out a backhoe, a bulldozer, an air compressor and a power generator.

Sixty-six former employees of FGCC based here said the company failed to pay their Social Security System and Philhealth premiums. FGCC was dismissed by Dae-

woo for nonperformance, after completing only 25 percent of what was expected of it. The firm also owed Daewoo P70 million.

The 66 employees, in their joint third-party claims, said the equipment left by FGCC should be given to them as payment for their claims.

"Since FGCC is a contractor based in Metro Manila, its only asset that we know of is the equipment left along Halsema High-

way. We are entitled to the possession of the equipment until such time that our wages and benefits are fully settled," they said.

John Haight, owner of the property in Sayangan, said FGCC's accumulated claims had reached P200,000.

FGCC's subcontractors also filed separate third-party claims against FGCC on Dec. 20. They said FGCC did not pay them their retention fees. Their total claims

reached more than P500,000.

They said they wanted to possess FGCC's equipment until the company paid their fees.

In two instances in October FGCC employees, accompanied by members of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, stormed the Daewoo stockyard and took almost P25 million worth of equipment. *Frank Cimat, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

INQUIRER Mindanao

Groups alert Mindanao folk to scam

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Davao City

VARIOUS entities in Mindanao, including those in the government, have warned the public not to fall prey to a group that offers attractive packages and promises of economic development.

That group calls itself Bangsamoro Economic and Development Council Inc. or Bedco. The information gathered and documents obtained by the INQUIRER show that Bedco, which claims a membership base of about 500,000, has been operating for years now, offering job placements with juicy salary rates in exchange for fees from applicants. The money would allegedly be used as processing fees and for the reservation of posts.

The group also promises to undertake projects worth millions of pesos including those for public health, livelihood and education.

And some people on this development-hungry island have taken the bait.

Sources said the people behind Bedco could have already raked in millions of pesos just from fees they collected from hopeful jobseekers.

High salaries

In North Cotabato, the group offered an accounting graduate an P18,000 monthly salary—plus perks and allowances—for a supervisory job.

The aspirant, whose elder relative was offered a much higher position with P30,000 take-home pay plus car, paid P200 as a processing fee.

A security guard, also in North Cotabato, was promised a P10,000 monthly salary.

In Davao City, a cab driver applied for two positions: as a driver and as a municipal coordinator. As a Bedco driver he was promised a P15,000 monthly salary and P30,000 a month if he gets the municipal coordinator post. The cab driver paid a processing fee of P800.

A check with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) office in Davao City said Bedco was registered on May 25, 1999, as a non-stock corporation with registration number D199900475. It is headed by a Datu Saik Buhisan, with principal office at Purok 26, Times Beach, Bucana, Matina, Davao City.

Documents obtained by the INQUIRER also showed that the group has a Manila office, which serves as their national headquarters. Its address: c/o Vanguard Anti-Graft Task Force HQ, 14 IBP Road, Batasan Hills, Quezon City.

Donations?

Carmen Toledo, Bedco's chair for Southern Mindanao, said they never collected money from their recruits. She told radio station dxND in Kidapawan City that the money they collected from the applicants were not compulsory fees, but donations.

"We don't have funds for mobilization. The money that was collected was used for the follow-up of the release of our money," she said.

Buhisan described the collection of fees as "normal and part of the procedure in every NGO or development foundation."

Joselito Rodriguez, SEC Monitoring Division Head, said the nature of Bedco's registration does not permit its officials to recruit people for employment.

As a nonstock corporation, Bedco's articles of incorporation indicate that the group is only allowed to accept economic aid, donations, grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance



GIRLS in Jolo, Sulu, play native instruments for the arrival of US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone. The US government and various other groups provide funds for Mindanao projects, but an alert has been put out for a group calling itself Bedco which is turning out to be a scam.

TRACY MALCOLM FOR MINDANAO BUREAU

from both foreign and local lending institutions.

Its primary purpose, as indicated in the articles of incorporation, is to undertake the implementation of socioeconomic development programs designed to alleviate the standard of living of the Bangsamoro inhabitants in Mindanao.

Also, it is to serve as a co-partner of the government in its various socioeconomic development endeavors in Mindanao, through donations, grants and loans that would come from the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the World Islamic Bank.

Scam

"We got inquiries from many people already. These people claimed that Bedco collected money from them in exchange for certain positions with very high salaries enough to embarrass other executives," Rodriguez said.

Atty. Godofredo Durendes, SEC officer-in-charge, said they still have to receive complaints from those who were reportedly recruited.

"If we can prove that they went out of what they were supposed to do, it would be possible that their certificate would be revoked," Durendes said.

Despite its legal stature, the government arm Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) repeatedly rang the alarm against Bedco's activities.

And so did the Young Moro Professionals Network Inc. (YMPN) and Maradeka, two of Mindanao's prominent Bangsamoro groups.

Balbano Sangid, YMPN president, said there is much reason for the entire Bangsamoro community to be offended by the group's use of the term Bangsamoro.

"It is very disrespectful and annoying... We urge this group to stop capitalizing (on) the impoverished condition of the Moro people. They must stop using 'Bangsamoro' as a ticket for money-making ventures," Nishreen Pangadapin, Maradeka secretary general, said.

Bedco documents show that on Aug. 23, the group sent President Macapagal-Arroyo a letter asking her to do something for the release of the fund for proposed

livelihood projects for the "upliftment of the Bangsamoro people in the rural/depressed areas in Mindanao, amounting to \$7.5 billion through Dr. Ahmed Mohammad Ali, president of the Islamic Development Bank (Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)."

Billions

Another letter, also signed by Buhisan, was requesting the President to "intercede and expedite the release of financial assistance from the OIC-ADB in the amount of \$250 billion (and the \$7.5 billion) which will be deposited in PNB-Davao account number 385-830995-5."

"The financial assistance is very much needed today... it will be exclusively used for livelihood, development, housing, agro-industrial and education," the letter signed by Buhisan said.

Datu Sami Asikam, the group's coordinator for the Indigenous People in Southern Mindanao, said their Malacanañang liaison was a Gen. Elly Convocar.

Convocar, he said, is "malakas sa (influential in) Malacanañang." But INQUIRER sources in the

Palace said there was no Convocar in Malacanañang.

Yo Montenegro, Medco's chief economic development specialist, said they have been receiving inquiries about Bedco and its affiliation with Medco.

"It must be noted that Bedco is not in any way, formally or informally, associated with Medco and therefore, all its activities and transactions are not sanctioned by Medco or by any known government entity or foreign donor organization/agency," Montenegro said.

Montenegro said the only interaction Medco had with Bedco was when the agency received copies of project proposals submitted by the group to various national offices. The proposals have since been referred back to Bedco for further validation and substantiation, he said.

"Please be forewarned. Let us not take this sitting down. Already, we have lost our homeland, do we allow the identity of the Moro to be tamished as well?" Sangid added. With reports from Joselle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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New system of learning adopted for tribes

By Garmelina Lacorte
Davao City

LEADERS of over 47 indigenous tribes nationwide are fighting to save their dying culture by helping put up alternative schools that seek to strengthen their way of life.

As the first batch of graduates leave elementary in the next two years, tribal leaders like Higaonon Datu Tony Lumadong of Misamis Oriental look forward to seeing a similar indigenous high school put up.

In his town, the Higaonon way of life is fading fast. Most of the Higaonons already speak

the settlers' language (Bisaya) and are adopting the settlers' way of life.

"Most of the children even grow up ashamed of their own tradition," said Benny Cumatang, also a Higaonon, in Mintapud, Impasug-on town of Bukidnon.

"It's only in indigenous schools like the School of Indigenous Knowledge and Tradition (Sikat) that our children begin to appreciate what we have," says Lumadong in a tribal leaders forum here recently.

Native learning

Instead of typical schoolteachers who rely heavily on Western-oriented textbooks, Sikat teachers are tribal youths themselves who draw out learning from tribal wise men, elders and baylans (tribal priests or priestesses) in their own communities, according to Al Santos, executive director of the Asian Council on Peoples' Cultures (ACPC).

Sikat currently runs 12 elementary schools in different tribal communities nationwide, from the Tbolis of Lake Sebu to the Higaonons in Misamis Oriental and the Aetas in two Mt. Pinarubo resettlement areas in Zambales, he said.

"Education is [too] critical to be left in the hands of the few," said Santos, who believes that the Department of Education's curriculum could never answer the educational needs of the tribes, whose demand to practice their own system of education is closely linked to their unresolved ancestral domain claims.

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) ensures that indigenous tribes get to practice their own customs and beliefs within their ancestral domain.

"In each tribal community, the Sikat curriculum is designed to suit the needs of the people," Santos said. "For government to design the IP curriculum for them only defeats the very concept of indigenous education."

Increasing population

At present, Sikat serves over 700 students nationwide, but this number is expected to reach 2,500 in two years, said Santos.

"We plan to set up at least four Sikat schools in each of the country's 47 provinces, where there are indigenous people around," he said.

In the future, the indigenous schools will create a pool of IP professionals, who will love their own language and rich heritage, and give what they learned back to the people, Santos said.

The local government shoulders 60 percent of the cost of each Sikat school project, while the ACPC shoulders 40 percent.

Funds are now being raised for the first Sikat high school that will be set up as soon as the first batch of Sikat graduates leave elementary school in the next two years, Santos said.

Lumadong said the "dominant culture" of the settlers in Mindanao and the pervasive influence of TV and other forms of mass media are stripping his own tribe of their own way of life.

"Some of our children, who feel different, are ashamed of what they are," he said.

Facing extinction

Like the B'laans, the Bagobos, the Manobos and the Bukidnons, the Higaonons are among the country's 110 ethnic tribes whose cultures and traditions are facing extinction, according to ACPC.

Even the country's educational system reinforces the IP children's feeling of alienation, with its English-language textbooks and the different culture that the system brings.

"You cannot expect all IP children to be multilingual," said Santos.

"In South Cotabato, for instance, where the dominant language is Ilonggo, a T'boli girl has to translate her thoughts from T'boli to Ilonggo when she enters school. Then, she has to translate her thoughts again to Tagalog and English when she opens her textbooks. Language skills are not the sole basis of intelligence," Santos said.

"On top of this, our T'boli student has to deal with a new culture in school totally different from the one she finds at home," he said.

So, while they also teach the 3Rs here, the Sikat schools use the indigenous peoples' language as the medium of instruction, says Santos.

In Lake Sebu, for instance, students are learning things in their own T'boli language, and with it, the whole set of tribal rituals and practices they grow up with, says Maria Todi Wanan, who is in charge of the Lake Sebu Sikat school.

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Alert bus driver foils Xmas Eve bombing

By Lelia B. Salaverria and Alcuin Papa

ROUTINE can be boring, but it can save lives.

At 7:45 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Friday, Felix Embernace, driver of a G Liner passenger bus, was checking on his unit when he found a black backpack under one of the seats in the middle portion of the vehicle.

The bus was then parked along the northbound lane of Quezon Boulevard in Quapo, Manila, while waiting for passengers and getting ready for its trip to Cainta, Rizal. It was near C.M. Recto Avenue and the Sta. Cruz station of the Western Police District.

No owner

According to the police, Embernace asked passengers who owned the bag but no one claimed it.

Feeling suspicious, the driver inspected the bag by feeling its contents and found it heavy and containing what seemed like a box.

Embernace then asked passengers to get off while he sought the help of police.

Members of the Western Police District Explosives and Ordnance Division (EOD) later found a bomb inside the bag.

A ranking member of the EOD said a bomb-sniffing dog was sent up the bus and it sat beside the suspicious backpack, indicating that it contained explosives.

EOD operatives then sprang into action and the bomb was "rendered safe," meaning its detonation device was removed while leaving the device intact for further scrutiny.

Dismantled

At the EOD office at the WPD headquarters, bomb experts dismantled the explosive device to give them a clue as to who could have planted it on the bus.

Embernace told police that he noticed a male passenger who got on at Lawton and got off in Quiapo, just across the Quezon bridge over the Pasig River and less than a kilometer from where he boarded.

An explosives expert from the National Police told the INQUIRER that the bomb was made up of TNT powder, possibly taken from unexploded mortar shells.

The timing device used was an old countdown timer, the ordnance expert said. He, however, could not say what time it was set to go off.

Another source from the WPD said the bomb contained two kilos of explosive powder, which he added could have created a highly deadly blast inside the airconditioned bus.

The composition of the bomb was confirmed by another source from the PNP. The source added that the bomb's signature, or distinctive marks in its construction, was similar to the explosive devices which Al-Qaeda member Ramzi Yousef taught members of the Abu Sayyaf Group to make in the 1990s.

Circa 1995

"The signature of the bomb is circa 1995 and is very rare. Crushed TNT is now used only by dynamite fishermen," the source said.

The source added, "Bombs of this kind originate from Mindanao. The signature fits into devices used by the Abu Sayyaf Group which were taught to them by Yousef."

In 1995, police securing the visit of Roman Catholic Pontiff Pope

John Paul II stumbled on a bomb-making factory run by Yousef after a fire hit a unit of the Josefa Apartments in Malate, Manila, where the Al-Qaeda member had set up shop. Yousef managed to flee the country but was arrested in Pakistan.

Abu Sayyaf mentor

Intelligence reports have said that Yousef trained members of the Abu Sayyaf in explosives before he was arrested. Details of the training given by Yousef to the ASG was discovered inside his Malate apartment.

The Abu Sayyaf is a terrorist group that was involved in high-profile kidnappings of local and foreign tourists in the 1990s.

The discovery of the bomb came two days after the police in Manila were put on alert for the burial of movie actor and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had announced that there were intelligence reports that some groups would use the burial as a launching pad to destabilize the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Visitors create festive atmosphere at NBP

IN JAIL but not forgotten.

Close to 5,000 visitors who have trooped to the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City created a festive atmosphere at the penitentiary, said officer-in-charge Insp. Emilio Tupaz.

He said it was heartwarming to see inmates enjoying Christmas with their families.

He said several nongovernment organizations had also been

present to give gifts to prisoners, who received slippers, food, shirts and soap.

Among those who came were ABS-CBN broadcaster Pinky Webb and actress Pinky de Leon who visited their kin, Hubert Webb.

According to Tupaz, Christmas is the only occasion when conjugal visits are allowed by Bureau of Corrections Director Vicente Vinarao. Nancy C. Garvajal

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PERALTA. Tagged by victim's sons. JOAN BONDOC

Suspect in cop's killing arrested

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE POLICE arrested Friday night the primary suspect in last Thursday's killing of a police officer in Pasig City.

"We arrested the suspect just minutes before the traditional Noche Buena," city police chief Sr. Supt. Raul Medina said over the phone.

Suspect Chris Peralta, 25, of Barangay Rosario, Pasig, had been hiding in Barangay Palauw, also in the city, since dawn Thursday, when four men shot and killed PO3 Florencio Antolin inside a passenger jeep, according to Medina.

"The suspect was positively identified by the victim's two sons as the same person who shot their father," Medina said.

Medina added that the suspect was traced through the "grapevine"—meaning through informants.

Acting on a tip, the police raided a house in Palatiw at about 11 p.m. Friday, and arrested Peralta.

He did not resist arrest, Medina said.

PO3 Florencio Antolin, 45, fetched his sons, Fernando and Francisco, 20 and 18 respectively, from a bus terminal in Quezon City just a few hours into Thursday.

The sons had just arrived from Cagayan. The police said that like most fathers, Antolin wanted to be with his sons during the holidays.

The trio then took a bus to Edsa Crossing, where they rode a jeepney, on their way to Barangay Pinagbuhatan in Pasig City.

When they reached the Rizal Medical Center on Pasig Boulevard, the robbers declared the heist and directed the jeepney driver to turn right to a small road.

The robbers had flanked Antolin on his left and right sides.

Quoting Antolin's surviving sons, Medina said the officer promptly reacted and tried to reach for his gun.

"The robbers shot him. Not contented with that, they also stabbed him several times," Medina said.

After divesting the other passengers of their belongings, the robbers fled toward Kalaayan Avenue in Makati City.

Antolin's sons rushed him to the Rizal Medical Center where he was declared dead on arrival.

Rizal Park tree: East meets West

By Tarra V. Quismundo

LIKE a monument to the traditional Filipino Christmas celebration, a Christmas tree—albeit a borrowed symbol from the West—stands tall in the heart of the capital.

Sharing a place for heroes at the Rizal Park in Manila is the 42-foot Paskong Pinoy Tree, the centerpiece of the tourism department's Paskong Pinoy program.

It was unveiled on Dec. 1 at the park's western half, a few meters from the Rizal Park lagoon and signed with the monument of national hero Jose Rizal.

The unveiling highlighted the Department of Tourism's Christmas celebration that included a monthlong array of concerts and cultural performances in the sprawling park grounds.

"It is unique because the decorations are native materials, not like the others which are hi-tech. It looks nice," said 39-year-old Roberto Alonsabe, who brought his wife, daughter and year-old twins to the park Friday from their hometown of Bacoor, Cavite, to celebrate Christmas.

The tree, funded by telecommunications giant Globe Telecom, was erected, assembled and decorated for a full month at its site in the Rizal Park, through the handiwork of exhibit design and fabrication firm X-habit Inc.

"We used indigenous materials from the bottom up. We bought materials from local markets like Divisoria, where there is a concentration of native materials," said project manager Ito Rivera.

Covering the tree's 18-foot wide base are various sizes of bi-



CHILDREN check out the unique Christmas tree on the Rizal Park grounds that provides a native treat to park goers. ERLANZAS

lao, which are round, native containers made of bamboo strips.

On the layer above these were placed large anahaw fans, followed by a layer of darker-colored native fruit trays.

The second layer on top was covered in banyan, a native mat, providing a fitting ascent to the tree top sealed with dried rahihi leaves.

Lively colored parol or star lanterns were also hung around the tree.

The layers' shades of abaca-to-chocolate brown gave the tree's body a unique monochromatic color, while its decor gave it simple but playful hints of color, not seen in typical western Christmas trees decorated by mostly shiny metal or plastic decor.

Karaoke sparks gas blast

By Tina G. Santos

A 19-YEAR-OLD woman was severely burned when a spark from a karaoke machine caused a gas leak inside her home in Caloocan City to ignite.

Police said Angelita Torio was preparing for their Christmas celebration at about 4 p.m. Friday when liquefied petroleum gas that had been leaking from a defective gas tank exploded.

Torio, of Daang Bakal Street, Barangay 56, suffered second degree burns and was taken to the President Diosdado Macapagal Memorial Center for treatment.

Investigation showed that the gas tank in the house had developed a leak and that gas had accumulated inside the poorly ventilated house.

While reportedly preparing for their celebration, Torio thought of turning on their karaoke.

The machine was reportedly unplugged so the woman connected it to a power outlet.

However, a spark was reportedly created while she was inserting the plug into the socket.

Police said the gas exploded and threw Torio a few feet away onto the floor, badly burned.

The incident prompted authorities to reiterate earlier warnings and remind the public against buying cheaper but usually defective LPG tanks.

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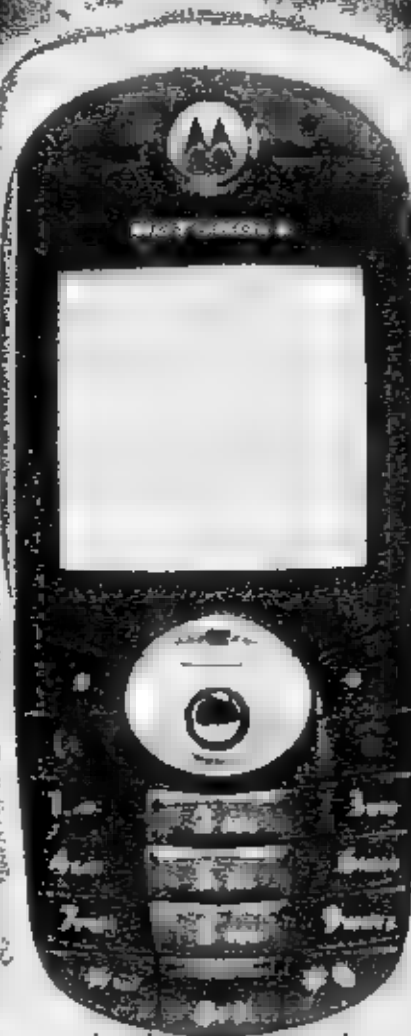
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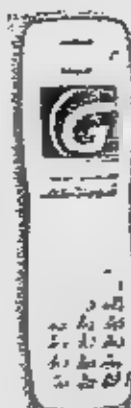
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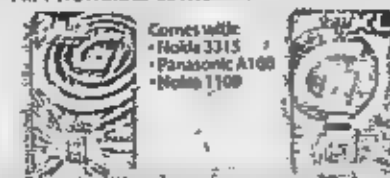


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TENNIS: US Open 2004, 12:30 p.m., STAR Sports—Take another look at the semifinal battle between Lindsay Davenport and Svetlana Kuznetsova.

FOOTBALL: EPL, 8:50 p.m., STAR Sports; 11 p.m., ESPN—Arsenal collides with Fulham while Manchester United battles the Bolton Wanderers.

Sched.ulas subject to change without prior notice.



Compiled by
Lorenz Mangubat

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday
SPORTS

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Firms not ready to back SEAG

By Marc Anthony Reyes

EXCEPT for the funds, everything appears to be in order for the country's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

With only 10 months left to the Games, the organizing committee is still looking for sources of money to finance the country's third hosting of the 11-nation, biennial Games.

Philsoc secretary general, Steve Montiveros said they are in the process of finalizing the guidelines for sponsorships for the Nov. 27 to Dec. 5, 2005 SEA Games with the help of a Malaysia-based marketing firm.

He expressed optimism that the country can produce the P800-million estimated cost to host the 41 sports disciplines that will be held in Metro Manila, Subic, Bacolod City and Cebu City.

However, some Philsoc officials are worried over the marketing strategy since there have been no reports yet of corporations that showed willingness to fund the Games.

They said the marketing play may not be able to cover even half of the expenses and that it would eventually be the government that will be left shouldering the lion's share of hosting the biennial meet.

The government is counted upon to help chip in for the expenses through government-owned and controlled corporations and government financing institutions.

But although these firms have committed to help, they haven't announced any amount they were ready to shell out.

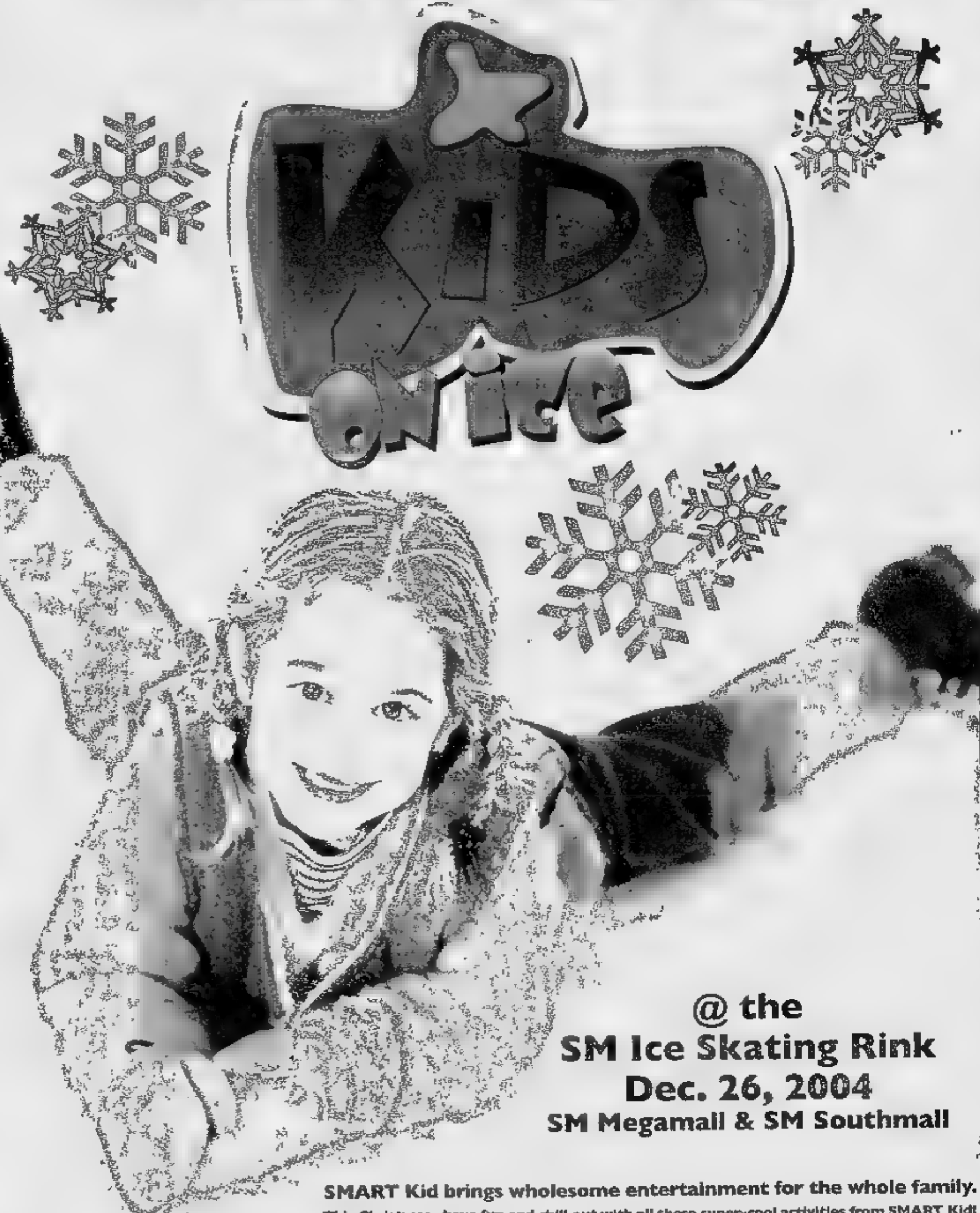
Last week, Philsoc chair Obet Pagdanganan toyed with the idea of slashing the number of sports disciplines to cut some expenses but this play may not get the nod of the SEAG Federation which had already formalized the calendar last November.

According to SEAG Federation rules, the calendar of events must be finalized exactly a year before the meet so that member-nations can get ample time to prepare.

In place of this, Pagdanganan said the number of events per sport—now pegged at a total 388—could be increased instead.

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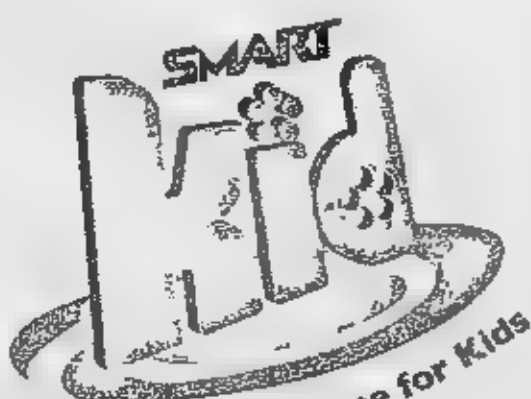
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■ Ginebra books first outright semis slot /A18



■ Skid puzzles Tortillos /A19



■ Cancer-stricken player getting better, hopes for best /A23

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Godfather needed to save volley—Bernardino

By Musong R. Castillo

VOLLEYBALL needs a godfather. Soon. Jun Bernardino feels that a patron to take care of the national volleyball program can be the solution to the country's woes in the sport, especially with the Southeast Asian Games in Manila coming. "How I wish, sooner than later, that we'll be able to find a godfather who will give us the necessary boost," Bernardino said yesterday, sharing the sentiments of Tats Suzara.

Suzara blasted the Philippine Amateur Volleyball Association (Pava) on Friday for not being able to come up with a solid program that would make players of international caliber for the country.

"It's understandable to read something

like that," Bernardino said. "Especially from someone who knows the sport inside and out."

Bernardino, who together with Moring Martelino organized the Shakey's V League, is chipping in his share to revive the interest in volleyball in the country.

The league's second conference has in fact taken a theme of "bringing back the glory," which Bernardino said is also aimed for the SEAG in December next year.

"We have to make an impact in the SEA Games next year, with the country hosting the event and all," the former PBA Commissioner said. "The talent is there, we just have to be able to push the right buttons."

"We came up with the idea (of the V

League) in order for us to bring back the glory, and what better time to rally an entire country behind one team than next year (in the SEA Games)."

"But it will not be easy doing this," Bernardino said. "I'm sure Tats (Suzara) knows that we are pressed for time, given the fact that we have less than a year left to prepare."

Suzara is a member of the world governing International Volleyball Federation's development committee and was the Pava's secretary-general the last time the Philippines won a gold medal in the SEAG.

"That was more than 10 years ago, and look at the players that we have," Suzara said. "By this time, we should have players who are better than the old ones, but it's

not the case."

Bernardino knows that a godfather program will work, considering that he was in the PBA when Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco took up the cudgels for basketball and won numerous international titles for the country.

That program also produced the likes of Hector Calma, Samboy Lun and Allan Cardic, to name a few, who made it all the way to the list of the PBA's 25 Greatest Players.

Suzara made his comments after the PSC team, made up of supposed has-beens who have been out of the sport for so long, surprisingly managed to rack up a 4-2 record in the V-League despite playing against the top players in the country today.



BERNARDINO: Push the right buttons. PHOTOFEST

SPORTSWATCH

Tabada, Sepulveda rule Cebu Chess

JOBANIE Tabada and Victor Sepulveda defeated their respective rivals to emerge champions in the two tournaments of the Cebu Executives and Professionals Chess Association (Cepca) recently at the Handuraw Learning and Leisure Café in Cebu City. Tabada, top 10 in the 1999 Grand Asian Chess Challenge in Malaysia took the scalp of Dante Arguelles in the championship match to win first prize in the year-end Cepca Grand Finals Tournament, which featured champions of the monthly Cepca tournaments. Sepulveda on the other hand trounced Danny Pestafio in the final round to take the Cepca December Tournament, which was open to all non-finalists.

Marion Bernardino, Contributor

MCC active chess kicks off

THE METROPOLITAN Chess Club (MCC) Executive Category 1 and II active chess tournament reels off at 1 p.m. on Dec. 30, with National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) vice president and Primaria Plans Inc. CEO/President Eduardo Madrid sponsoring the top prizes. The event kicks off at the club's headquarters located at the 4/F of J&F Divino Bldg. near LRT 2 Anonas Station in Quezon City. The event organized by MCC founding chair/president and former Olympian WIM Mila Emperado, also the public relations officer and director of the NCFP. The tournament offers a top prize of P5,000 for Category 1 and P7,000. For inquiries, call MCC at 4358412 and 09168521069. Marion Bernardino, Contributor

Beach volley invades Golf Power

"GOLF POWER" today, resumes its special feature on the Toyota Ballatawax Women's Beach Volleyball Challenge with two exciting matches in the elimination round. University of Asia and the Pacific plays against College of St. Benilde 2 in the collegiate division and Philippine Air Force faces Philippine Air Force 2 in the open division. The matches were played at the beach volleyball court of the Cantada Sports Center in Taguig. The beach volleyball event will be covered by sportscaster Ed Picson and sports analyst Quinita Henson. "GOLF POWER" is aired every Sunday at 3 p.m. on RPN-9 and is followed by the popular boxing show "Samsung's Fistorama" at 4 p.m. Fistorama is brought to you by Samsung, Fanduan Rum, Mapecon and PCSO.

New fight show unwraps

A NEW boxing program featuring upcoming Mindanao boxers will soon air over NBN 4, "Battle Royale," hosted by North Cotabato Governor Manny F. Piñol will have its maiden telecast at 8 p.m. on Jan. 2 and will be aired regularly every Sunday thereafter. The initial telecast will feature the fight between WBC No. 8 Flyweight Diosdado "Prince" Gabi of Davao City and Saensak Singsmanasak of Thailand. Gabi recorded an impressive win during the fight held at the Lantawan Hall of the Royal Mandaya Hotel in Davao City December 19, knocking out Singmanasak at 1:34 in the second round.

Gonzales-Contiga on Ringside

FORMER Philippine junior flyweight champion Eugene Gonzales displays his fighting prowess anew when he meets Dante Contiga in today's Ginebra San Miguel's Ringside TV Boxing from 3-4 pm over ABC-5. The scheduled 10-round battle is presented by Galordia Enterprises and ABC-5, and will be beamed to the United States through Mabuhay Channel. As an added attraction, hosts Havy Bagatsing and Luis Zabalauregui will feature well-known American boxing trainer Freddie Roach. Roach, 2003 best trainer awardee, visited Manila recently and guided People's Featherweight king Manny Pacquiao to a devastating 4th round knockout win against Thai Fahsang 3K Battery at The Fort.



RED BULL guard Jimwell Torion soars for a lay-up against San Miguel gunner Dondon Montiveros in yesterday's game. ERNE U. SAMPAYO

GAMES JAN. 5 (PhilSports Arena)
4:30 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs FedEx
7:20 p.m.—Alaska vs Sta. Lucia Realty

By June Navarro

ANDY Seigle gave Barangay Ginebra die-hards something to cheer about this Christmas by sparking the Gin Kings to a 108-102 win over Talk 'N Text before an overflow crowd in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Seigle successfully challenged the foul-saddled big men of the Phone Pals in the paint, banging in 10 of his 15 points in the final period as the Gin Kings went on to finish their elimination stint on top of the standings.

By closing out their 16-game elimination schedule with a victory, the Gin Kings will automatically advance to the semifinal round, which will mean bypassing the wildcard phase and the best-of-three quarterfinals.

The Gin Kings wrapped up the preliminary round of the eliminations with a 13-5 record, a full game ahead of the Phone Pals and the Shell Turbochargers (12-6), who will dispute the second semifinal seat in a one-game playoff.

"It's been a good year for Barangay Ginebra," said Kings coach Slot Bunquinen.

In the first game of yesterday's jam-packed Christmas doubleheader, Nic Belasco torched the hoops with 27 points and grabbed 22 rebounds to help San Miguel stave off rampaging Red Bull, 92-78.

It was the second time this conference that Belasco posted 20-20 figures in points and rebounds. Belasco is one of two players who accomplished the feat this conference, the other being Eric Menk of Barangay Ginebra.

Jayjay Helterbrand scored a career-high 33 points and actually kept the Gin Kings in fighting mood throughout, but it was the heroics of the 6-foot-9 Seigle in the shaded area that doomed the Phone Pals.

Seigle unabashedly burst into tears just seconds away from the final buzzer.

Jimmy Alapag had a career-high 39 points and eight three-pointers for the Phone Pals.

SAN MIGUEL 92—Belsco 27, Montiveros 13, Racala 11, Idelonso 11, Seigle 10, Peña 10, Singson 8, Mente 2, Gamboa 0, Viloria 0.
RED BULL BARAKO 78—Baguio 20, Tigard 17, Bernardo 10, Villanueva 6, Asayon 6, Torion 6, Rodriguez 5, Valenzuela 5, Alvarez 3, Lopez 0, Robinson 0, Agapito 0.

Quarters: 27-21, 48-40, 69-55, 92-78.
Second game
GINEBRA 108—Helterbrand 33, Capuina 22, Menk 17, Seigle 14, Salvadori 6, Santos 6, Adducul 5, Noble 4, Valenzuela 0, Dirquinana 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 102—Alapag 39, Miller 24, De Ocampo 15, Tolan 12, Fran 6, Pabio 6, Salangang 0, Ravera 0, Camaso 0, Belano 0.
Quarters: 20-20, 42-40, 79-80, 106-102.

Hawaii QB sets yardstick Badminton Hub offers new concept

HONOLULU—Timmy Chang capped his record-setting career in style.

Chang became the first college quarterback to pass for 17,000 yards, throwing for four touchdowns and running for another to lead Hawaii over Alabama-Birmingham, 59-40, in the Hawaii Bowl on Friday night.

The senior went 31-of-46 for 405 yards with no interceptions, spoiling the Blazers' first trip to a bowl game. Chad Owens caught eight passes for 114 yards and two TDs for Hawaii (8-5), which made its third straight appearance in the 3-year-old bowl.

Owens also scored on a 59-yard punt return in the decisive third quarter, and teammate Jason Rivers added 11 receptions for 148 yards and a TD.

Clinging to a two-point lead, Hawaii scored 17 straight points in the third to take a 45-26 lead. UAB (7-5) never recovered.

A 15-yard pass by Chang to Owens widened Hawaii's lead in the third and made Chang the

first college quarterback to break the 17,000-yard mark for his career.

Chang's 4-yard TD run in the fourth sealed the victory. He came out to a standing ovation with 5:40 left.

Chang threw for 4,258 yards this season, with a career-best 38 TDs. He was 19-of-27 for 308 yards and three TDs in the first half of this game.

UAB was led by quarterback Darrell Hackney, who finished 31-of-54 for 417 yards and two touchdowns. He also had a rushing TD.

Roddy White, the second-leading receiver in the nation, had six receptions for 113 yards.

Both high-powered offenses got off to a quick start on a 75-degree Fahrenheit (24-degree Celsius) Christmas Eve, scoring five touchdowns in the first 10 minutes of the game.

The win was the Warriors' eighth straight at Aloha Stadium, though they were designated the visiting team for this game.

WHILE there has been a steady increase in first-class courts and facilities that boosts the popularity of badminton, players continue to look for a one-stop shop where everything they need is available.

Badminton Hub hopes to provide the missing link to the badminton boom.

Now creating a stir in the new Greenbelt 4 in Makati, Badminton Hub offers not just wide selection of badminton-related goods ranging from rackets to shuttlecocks and apparel but other interesting products and services that makes it the first specialty shop for the sport in the country.

Apart from Yonex, the other popular brands such as Mizuno, Kason, Victor, Dunlop-Carlton as well as emerging brands like Chao Pai and Sora are among those on sale at the Badminton Hub and the pricing is always competitive.

Badminton Hub, however, is not



MAKATI Mayor Jejomar Binay (middle) and siblings Kenzie (second from right) and Kenzie Asuncion (right) cut the ceremonial ribbon as former Mayor Prospero Oreta, Tony Yap, Melody dela Cruz look on.

merely a store that offers equipment. It will soon have other unique services available for badminton enthusiasts. The store already posts tournament schedules and details on a billboard to keep players updated on the latest happenings.

Store owners Tony Yap, Dino Angeles and Melody Dela Cruz came up with this idea after a long period of research and part of it is attending trade fairs abroad where they discussed the concept with suppliers.

The true giver

THE DAY after, the kid was torn between heeding what had been told him by his father the day before and playing basketball with his new basketball.

"Please, son, don't play basketball tomorrow," said his father to him. "Help your mother and sisters do the chores at home. Obey me, and the boy in the manger will take note."

The kid knew who the boy in the manger was—his namesake, Jesus.

"Can I play basketball even for only 30 minutes?" the kid, who turned eight on Dec. 25, pleaded first thing in the morning.

"No, son," said his father. "The

boy in the manger will be happier than me if you obey me."

The kid remembered what his mother told him about the boy in the manger.

"But mother said the boy in the manger personifies everything good in the world," said the kid. "Will the boy consider my playing basketball today bad?"

"Yes," father said. "For that would mean you will disobey me."

"But playing basketball isn't bad," the kid argued. "He won't mind."

"You are right, son," father said. "Playing basketball isn't

SPECTATOR



Al S. Mendoza

bad. What is bad is, when you disobey my wish for you not to play basketball today. The boy in the manger will mind."

The kid pursued his case. He went to his mother.

"Mother, please request father to allow me to play basketball today," said the kid.

Like most mothers, mother obliged.

"Please, let Jesus play basketball today," mother said to father. "Thirty minutes of play won't hurt."

"But I'm only trying to instill discipline in our son," said father. "I told him yesterday he can't play basketball today because he needs to help in the chores at home."

"C'mon, don't be a KJ, dear," mother said to father. "You know, he just got his basketball. He's as excited as the kid next door who got a bike this Christmas. New toys are a thrill to kids."

It was then that the kid's two

sisters came. Unknown to the couple, Jesus also went to his sisters to plead his case.

After some debate, the issue was put to a vote. Again, father lost, 3-1.

But to prove once more that father isn't a poor sport, he called out Jesus and broke the news himself to the kid: "OK, son, you won. You can play basketball. Thirty minutes."

Three things stand out here: 1) The only request, to impose, to order, isn't a harmonious thing in a family. 2) We can always appeal, plead, sometimes, appealing, pleading, can unearth reason, open up doors.

3) We can sometimes win a battle (30 minutes of playing time for the kid—a win for the father) but not the war (disallowing the kid to play basketball—a loss for the father).

Father's main argument: "The kid got his Christmas wish—the basketball. Wouldn't it be just fair if I got my wish, too—that he can't play basketball today?"

If we give and expect something in return, that's not giving. That's trading. Business.

I'm not original but I do know that the business of giving is giving. And, like the unknown soldier, the true giver is the unknown. Anonymous. Stranger.

YEAR'S LAST MAJOR RACE

Red Star Rising, Sexiest head cast

By Edwin Villanueva, Contributor

RED Star Rising will set out to defend the crown in the Philracom Classic Open Championship today at the Santa Ana Park.

But just like in the recent Presidential Gold Cup where he could only finish third, the pride of father-and-son duo of Francis and Michael Trillana is facing a wall of obstacles in the year's last major racing event.

Although PGC winner Empire King is not running, razor-sharp sexiest, "heartbreak kid" West Bound, highly-touted import

American Woman and never-say-die Lyonnais are in the elite 13-horse cast competing over the rigorous 2,050-meter journey.

The distance may favor Red Star Rising as well as the acquisition of star jockey Fernando "Dhuno" Raquel Jr. as his new partner but the top weight of 59 kilos, one more than what he carried in the PGC two weeks ago, may yet hamper the bed of the Khozam-Ito's Choice progeny.

"Tingnan natin pero maiaki ang tiwala ko sa kabayong ito (Let's see but I believe in this horse a lot)," said Raquel, tapped in lieu of Manolito Daquis who opted to mount Sexiest.

Aside from the Sandy Javier and Karen

Montelibano-owned Sexiest, also tipped to vie strongly for the P1 million first prize are West Bound, who for the second straight year lost the PGC by a nose; Lyonnais and American Woman.

Likewise entered are Hermie Esquerro's three imports Real Slew, Neat Laurel and Crystal Show; West Bound's coupled bet Cover Girl, Don Juan Derby winner Don Paolo, Being There, Suonos and Stowaway.

"This race is Philracom's way of saying thank you to all the industry's various sectors and the bayang kaurista who have stood tirelessly behind us," said Philracom boss Jimmy Dilag, adding that the run-

nerup in the race gets P376,750, with the third and fourth placers receiving P209,250 and P84,000, respectively.

Sexiest, by Bite the Bullet out of Gainesville, is currently on a 4-race winning binge. The light 53.5 kilos assigned on her may prove to be a plus factor aside from the fact that this Javier homebred runner is capable of either stalking the pacesetters or launching searing rallies.

After ruling the Legend Cup last Nov. 7, Sexiest went on to win the Grand Imported Championship (Nov. 21), William Inglis and Son Cup (Nov. 28) and warmed up in the Class Division (Dec. 11) for today's outing.

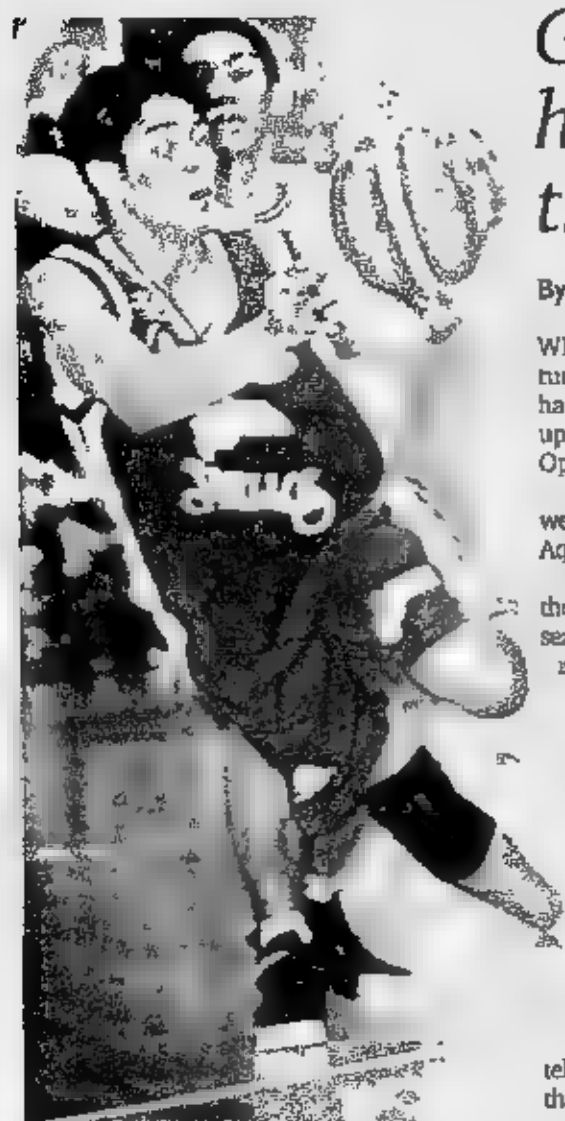
Eldy Salvador is once more heading West Bound, who also lost to Red Star Rising in this event last year. "Baka sakali makalusot na (Hopefully, he'll make it this time)," said Salvador.

Val Dilema will be up anew on American Woman, the 5-year-old mare who claimed two eye-popping wins in the class divisions.

The nimble-footed American Woman, a daughter of Honour and Glory, is expected to clash for the early lead with Don Paolo, Being There and Crystal Show.

Lyonais, the oldest in the lineup at 6, is again counting on experience and big fighting heart, attributes that carried him to the recent Marbo Breeders' Cup Classic tie.

Skid puzzles Tortillos



AFTER a scorching start, Marvin Cruz and the rest of the Tortillos seem to be caught in a free fall which they hope to end soon.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Granny Goose hopes to turn things around

By Jasmine W. Payo

WHEN the core of Granny Goose Tortillos return from their break in Cebu, they know they have to turn things around or they could end up watching their team fizzle out in the PBL Open tournament.

"We really can't pinpoint (the problem). I wish we knew," said Tortillos team manager Pat Aquino.

The league newcomer surprised everyone with their successful run in the first round. With no seasoned players in their roster, the Tortillos finished on top with a 6-1 record by running several powerhouse lineups including Monaña Pawnshop, Welcoat Paints and defending champion Magnolia-FEU.

The once promising team, however, is fading in the second round. Unable to sustain their strong start, the Tortillos rolled to an alarming four-game losing skid that brought them down to third place.

And league observers seem to have one question in mind: Had Granny Goose peaked too early?

"I hope not," said Aquino. "We've been really working hard telling the boys to step up and that the pressure that we're experiencing now is part of it."

Aquino added that the Tortillos' unknown roster used to be an advantage, but they apparently can't bank on it now. "Hindi pa kami kilala noon," he noted. "But you know how the other teams are in the PBL, they make adjustments."

Magnolia-FEU coach Roy Banal shared the same observation: "We didn't know their key players (from Cebu) like (Dennis) Concha, (Jex) Latonio and (Ardy) Larong. Pero napag-aralan na namin sila."

Changes are definitely in order. For instance, Granny Goose needs to ignite its offense again to halt its winless streak. In the first round, the team shot well at 45.3 percent from the field. But that dropped to 37.8 in the last four games.

Aquino, however, revealed that the Tortillos have been working double time to get back in top form. "Definitely there will be adjustments in our game plan," he said. "We've also been having try-outs. We need a more mature point guard."

Aquino is optimistic that that team can rebound. "I really hope we could adjust in time."

Tanauan chess on

THE 1ST Tanauan Chess Open-Mayor's Cup, the country's richest Active Chess tournament ever, will be held on March 4-5, 2005 at the Speaker Jose B. Laurel Memorial Gymnasium in Tanauan City.

The two-day tournament offers cash prizes to the top twenty finishers with the champion receiving a cool P100,000.

Backed by the First Asia Institute and the city government of Tanauan, the event is organized by the Active Chess Center of Asia and sanctioned by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

Race 1—1. Bronte 2. Well Noted 3. Top of D Line 4. Mr. Lucas
Race 2—1. Royal Catch/Margue 2. Surprise Target 3. Gosanne/Vole
Race 3—1. Decidido 2. Hello Africa 3. Jaw Breaker 4. Boogie Shoes
Race 4—1. Magpakailanman 2. Speed Advantage/Speed Admiral 3. Sir Brendan Jean 4. Gold is Gold
Race 5—1. Ravishing Rally 2. Golden Africa 3. Roppongi 4. Olive Right
Race 6—1. Alloy My Boy 2. Scout Missile 3. Casanova 4. Nitty Gitty
Race 7—1. Red Star Rising 2. Sexiest 3. West Bound/Cover Girl 4. Lyonnais 5. American Woman



AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 8—1. Court General 2. King Size 3. Gigi's Gold 4. Ichiro
Race 9—1. Silver Cho Cho 2. Seniority 3. Soy Numero Uno 4. Dynasty 5. Hurricane Doding
Race 10—1. Manila Magic 2. Sir Guguy
3. Cat's Gold 4. Joy Nicole
Race 11—1. Rivaldo 2. Silver Eagle 3. Habagat 4. Ginja 5. I Miss You
Race 12—1. Real Black 2. Makuna Mazata 3. Jyanito's Dream 4. Stradiarius
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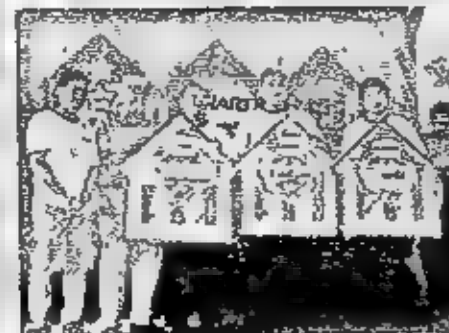
A good number of families got an early taste of Christmas last December 18, 2004. SMART gave Xmas Baskets full of foodstuffs to Baseco residents, sharing the Yuletide spirit with the less fortunate.

There was a festive mood in the air as the community was treated to singing and performances onstage, mostly by the humorous emcees. It was an unstructured and free-flowing celebration. Christmas is in the sharing and loving after all, and by the looks on faces of children, there was lots of love going around.



Dawn had clearly broken by the time the new building crew trooped to the SMART Amazing Village at the Baseco Compound in Tondo. For many in this group it would be their first taste of construction work and the enthusiasm glowed warm on each and every face. Today, SMART employees themselves were taking hammer and paintbrush in hand to do their part in realizing the SMART and Gawad Kalinga dream of completing shelters for a hundred displaced families.

Months ago during the groundbreaking, residents had literally risen from the ashes. Baseco had just suffered one of the worst fires in this community's history, and families saw their shanties, their very worlds go up in flames. Gawad Kalinga's vision of "GK 777" or 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years had caught the attention of SMART Communications. The day the first stones were laid then for the SMART Amazing Village was the day PLDT and SMART Chairman Manny V. Pangilinan celebrated his birthday with residents at Baseco.



It's not just about building homes.

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It's about building nation.

This day was for SMART employees to make even more direct contributions to the realization of GK 777. The morning's toil was a mere heartfelt and intimate connection to the vision of helping others help themselves. The sun shone bright but not hot as a gusty bay breeze blew away the dust and haze. Dawn had clearly broken, and a new day glowed with ever more promise.

OPENS JANUARY 6

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Packers clinch NFC divisional crown

MINNEAPOLIS—Ryan Longwell's 29-yard field goal as time expired in the fourth quarter lifted Green Bay past the Minnesota Vikings, 34-31, clinching the third straight NFC North title for the Packers.

Green Bay also beat Minnesota in

Week 10 by the same score thanks to Longwell's 33-yard field goal on the final play of regulation.

Brett Favre completed 30-of-43 passes for 365 yards with three touchdowns and one interception for the Packers (9-6).

Favre moved ahead of Warren Moon for third place on the all-time list for career passing yards.

Donald Driver caught 11 passes for a career-high 162 yards and a touchdown for Green Bay. Javon Walker and Bubba Franks also had TD receptions for the Packers, who have won eight of their last 10 contests.

Minnesota quarterback Daunte Culpepper finished 16-of-23 for 285 yards and three touchdowns. Reuters

Soccer boss is football's 'Scrooge'

LONDON—Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho takes his Premiership leaders into the busy holiday schedule insisting the Christmas football period "means nothing to him."

Mourinho, whose side faces Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, is adamant that he will only be in a party mood when the season comes to an end in May.

"The big challenge is to be champions at the end of the season. The Christmas football period means nothing," said the mercurial Portuguese coach.

"We know we have four difficult matches and it is normal you drop points. So the short-term challenge is to get the maximum points possible from these four matches and control the five-point advantage we have in relation to the second position."

Mourinho's Christmas message to the Blues fans, who are relishing the prospect of their first top flight title since 1955, is that family is more important than the game they flock to watch.

"My Christmas message to the fans is that family is much more important than football."

AFP

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James Blanco Jomari Yllana Iza Calzado
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MTRCB: PG ALL AGES ARE ADMITTED

ANG TANGING HERO
NG BAYAN

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2004

MTRCB RATING: GP

VILMA SANTOS CHRISTOPHER DE LEON
SHERRY CRUZ JAY MANALO EDDIE GARCIA

MANO PO III
MY LOVE

Text 1941 to 2346
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OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2004

A very merry Christmas

Cancer-stricken player getting better, hopes for best

By Jasmine W. Payo

LINO "Jon jon" Tabique Jr. wasn't sure if he would live to see Christmas.

At 21, the former University of the Philippines point guard has been carrying the fear of dying young.

"Umabot ako ng Christmas (I made it to Christmas)," he said, managing a chuckle.

Last January, Tabique was diagnosed with stage 3 non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a form of cancer affecting the lymphatic system.

The disease had spread extensively, attacking tissues and organs that helped his body fight infections and other diseases. The critical condition cut short

his hoop dreams and Tabique quickly started with chemotherapy to combat the ill-

"I was depressed for two months [after the diagnosis]," Tabique said. "I was often angry. I can't eat and I was always dizzy and often felt like throwing up after chemo."

Tabique also lost all his hair, which he loved wearing long. "After my first chemo, I just ran my fingers through my hair, at *sumasama na sila*," he said. "I had my head shaved right away because I'll feel more depressed if I see my hair slowly fall out."

But amidst bouts of depression, the ex-varsity player has shown great resolve. It has been a long and difficult treatment, but just last November, doctors said Tabique seems to be on his way to recovery.

"Long hair na ulit ako ngayon. Naka-

pag-gel na ako," Tabique shared with a hearty laugh. "There's no more chemo, no more radiation (therapy). I'm just taking medicines and vitamins."

But Tabique remains cautious, well aware that the condition of cancer patients can change. "I'm still under observation," he noted. "I also have to go back to the doctor on January."

The 5-foot-7 playmaker hopes to get back on the hardwood. "I haven't been playing basketball," said Tabique. "*Gusto ko sana maglaro* but my doctor said I need to rest."

Basketball always holds a special place in Tabique's heart. "As long as I can remember, I've been playing basketball."

Tabique started out scrimmaging in Sampaloc, Manila. He then became a member of the vaunted San Beda junior high school

basketball team.

His first NCAA junior championship title came in 1999 and among his teammates were IA Tenorio and Magnum Membrere of the Ateneo Blue Eagles and Arjun Cordero of the San Beda Lions.

Although his basketball career has taken a backseat, Tabique is happier now that he's aptly celebrating the gift of life on Christmas. He's spending the holidays with his family including his 10-month-old daughter, Andrei, and his father, Lino, a seaman who has decided to take care of his son full time.

His mother, Susan, however, is still in the United States working as a caregiver. "Sayang, she won't be here," he said.

"*Pero masaya na rin ako ngayon*," added Tabique. "I'm just hoping for good health for next year. *Sana tulay-tulay na*."

ONCE staring at the prospect of 'dying young,' Jon-jon Tabique looks forward to more tomorrows after celebrating the gift of life this Christmas. PHOTOS

Kobe-Shaq war relives rivalries of old—and more

EL SEGUNDO—For the game unlike any other in Lakers history, Kobe Bryant tried to find common ground this week, from the days before he first played alongside Shaquille O'Neal, as an 18-year-old rookie.

"I've watched many great matchups growing up with Magic and Bird, Magic and Michael," Bryant said. "It feels kind of weird now that us as a team are going up against the Miami Heat and we're involved in that same type of matchup that we used to watch growing up as kids."

If only the Christmas Day showdown at Staples Center between Bryant and O'Neal's Miami Heat was that simple. If only the storyline consisted of nothing more than two former teammates through eight seasons and three championships touching fists before upoff for the first time since the breakup.

The countless feuds and franchise-defining trade in July took care of that. All that remains now is hype, never-ending and inescapable, building until the two take the court at noon in front of a capacity crowd and national television audience.

They shadowed each other all season, then missed crossing paths by a half hour Friday afternoon at the Lakers' practice facility. Bryant walked out to his car before O'Neal rolled up in a trucked-out van, a receiving line forming at the passenger window.

Whatever feelings existed be-

tween the two during their time with the Lakers have vanished, even after Bryant's apology to O'Neal on television last week for bringing up his name to Eagle County, Colorado, detectives investigating his sexual-assault case.

O'Neal was asked if there was anything he wanted to say to Bryant and responded, "No." He was asked if he saw Bryant's apology and answered, "I don't watch TV. TV corrupts the mind."

For his part, Bryant was asked if he would have any added emotions and was more expansive than O'Neal, saying, "No, none, zero."

"It's just a game," Bryant said. "It's not an individual matchup. He's a center, I'm a guard. It's not like we're going to be mano-a-mano. It's not like a Shaq-Duncan matchup or a Shaq-Hakeem (Ola-juwon) matchup or even a (Patrick) Ewing or whatever it is."

This will be just the first in a series of Bryant/O'Neal showdowns this season and beyond. The two almost certainly will be starters on opposite sides in February's All-Star Game in Denver and will meet again in Miami on March 17, 2005, 39 games from now.

It could be the beginning of the NBA's next great rivalry, or at least the highest-rated game broadcast on Christmas.

"It depends on what type of games we have," Bryant said. "If we have these great games, these last-second games, stuff like that, I think people will look forward to it." *New York Times News Service*

O'Neal plays Santa, scores with LA fans

LOS ANGELES—Shaquille O'Neal came to town to play Santa Claus to 250 kids, and it didn't matter that the grinning basketball star was no longer a member of the home team.

After eight years as a star with the Los Angeles Lakers, O'Neal will play Saturday against the Lakers as a member of the Miami Heat.

But Friday, he was "Shaq-A-Claus" as he pulled up to the Challengers Boys & Girls Club in South Los Angeles in a truck filled with bicycles, Sony Playstations, karaoke machines, sneakers and other gifts.

"I'm glad to be back here. I miss everybody," O'Neal told reporters. "These kids are the future."

For several hours, O'Neal and teammate Damon Jones handed out gifts to the crowd.



O'NEAL: Shaq-A-Claus

O'Neal bought many of the gifts himself during a Friday morning visit to a Toys-R-Us store.

"He gives back a lot to us," said 16-year-old Dwayne Gibbons, who received a video game console from O'Neal. "He went back to Miami, but he doesn't forget about us. That's why I love him."

It didn't matter to the crowd that O'Neal would take the court at the Staples Center wearing another uniform. O'Neal downplayed talk of rivalry with former teammate Kobe Bryant—although earlier this week he spoke of himself as a "brick wall" against Bryant's "Corvette."

"Hopefully I'll get a great reception (from the crowd)," O'Neal said. "But who knows what's going to happen." *AP*

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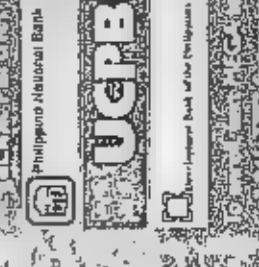
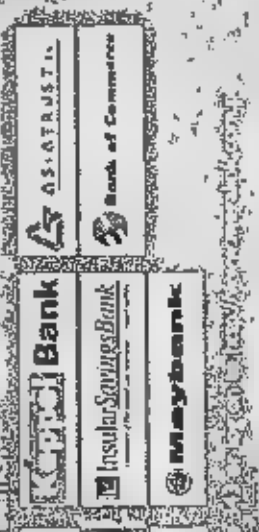
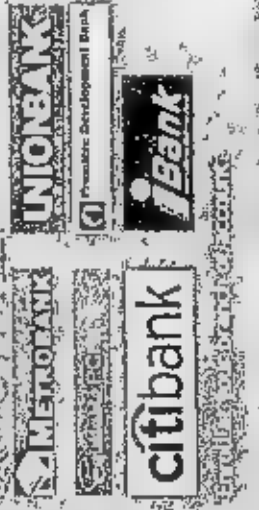
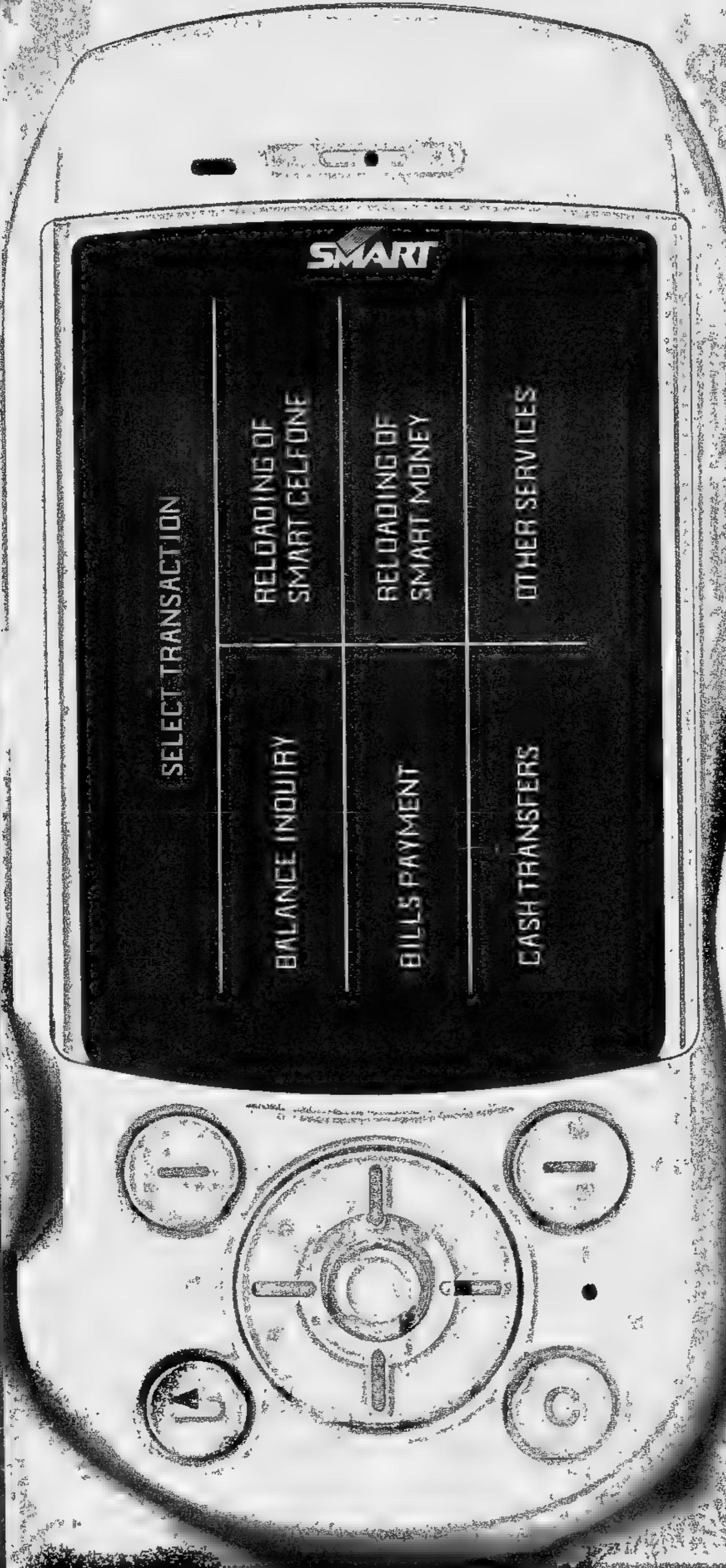
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Missing 'Manager'

By Nini Valera

THE FPJ Studios on Del Monte Avenue in Quezon City is still bustling with life.

Only a small portrait of Fernando Poe Jr. and a large picture

of Jesus Christ surrounded by flowers and food offerings are the visible signs of the actor's death. But it's business as usual for the living, like guard Ronnie Manabat, who keeps track of the

MISSING/ A2-2

VISITS by Fernando Poe Jr. to the FPJ Studios were rare, but in the last month, he came almost every day, says a guard.

JAN BONDOC

Lalong sumasarap ang pasko kapag sama-sama ang pamilya.



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Missing 'Manager'

From page A2-1

visitors that come and go at the compound.

"Hindi kayo nagpapalam sa akin [You haven't told me you're going]," Manabat told a group of delivery boys from San Miguel Corp., who were about to leave the studios with a truckload of softdrinks.

"You should register with me first," he added in Filipino.

Visits from 'Da King'

The FPJ compound has become a veritable storage area for the refreshments sent by FPJ's friends and supporters for the wake. Hundreds of boxes of softdrinks in cans, energy drinks, juices and instant noodles are stored side by side with the sacks of relief goods that FPJ was supposed to have helped pack for the typhoon victims in Quezon province just before he suffered what doctors called a "severe brain attack."

Manabat, 37, has been with FPJ for eight years. It's only been eight days since the actor died

and Manabat already misses the man, whom he calls "Manager."

"We call him Manager from the movie 'Manedyer si Kumander,'" Manabat explained.

"He was here practically everyday last month," the guard said. "He rarely came here. At most, he would visit here only two or three times a month."

"But last month, until the day he died, he came here to help pack the relief goods every day. We were all surprised."

A very kind man

The guard said that the last time he spoke to FPJ was at 6 p.m. of Dec. 12, the night the actor was rushed to the hospital after complaining of a headache.

"He told me to make sure the air conditioners were turned on for the party," Manabat said. "Instead of asking somebody else to do it, I turned on the air conditioners myself. That was the last time I spoke to the Manager."

Like millions of other Filipinos, Manabat is saddened by FPJ's death.



EMPTY, LONELY
is the FPJ Studios
without "Da King."

"He was a very kind man," Manabat said. "He always thought of everybody. If he and other people were here and if they were eating, he was the first to remember to send food to the guards."

"He would buy ten kilos of beef, ten kilos of pork, which would be cooked in a stove at the back of the studios. We are never hungry when he's around."

Manabat has heard tales of the actor's generosity, but he did not dare ask him for anything.

"I was embarrassed to ask him for help," he admitted. "It is enough that

he was a good boss and a kind man."

Hospital bills

Last Monday, Manabat showed INQUIRER Entertainment framed posters of FPJ's movies, all hanging on the wall of a large empty room in the studios.

The movie "Manager si Kumander," directed by the late Pablo Santiago, starred FPJ and wife Susan Roces.

Barely a week after Buddy Santos, a member of the production crew of FPJ, was discharged from the Philippine Heart Center, he was back at

work at the FPJ Studios.

"If not for him (FPJ), I would not have been able to get out of the hospital," Santos told INQUIRER Entertainment in Filipino.

"He paid for my bills. Helping out during his wake is the only way I know to repay him."

Santos, 48, said he first met FPJ 40 years ago as a movie fan.

"I would come here with [late actor] Van de Leon because I wanted to meet other actors," he recalled. "Later on, FPJ took me in to be a part of his crew. I am so happy to have known him."

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'Kundiman,' Christmas songs in Rizal Day breakfast concert

THE MABUHAY at Kalayaan Singers, led by Geronimo C. Sta. Maria, will be featured in a Rizal Day breakfast concert at the Plaza de Armas in Fort Santiago, Intramuros, Manila at 8 a.m. on Dec. 30.

The concert is presented by the Rizal Day 2004 National Organizing

Committee as one of the activities in the celebration of the 108th anniversary of the martyrdom of Dr. Jose Rizal.

The Rizal Day breakfast starts after the 7 a.m. flag-raising and wreath-laying ceremonies at the Rizal National Monument.

The concert, with the theme "Mga Awiting Kundiman Alay sa Inyong Kadakilaan," includes kundiman and Christmas songs. Sta. Maria will recite Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios" before the concert.

For more information, call 524-9952.

INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

SUNDAY 4:00 PM

SUNDAYS 4:00 pm

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ABS-CBN 2	SCD Rite	Value Vision	Tim Bux	PBA	S-File	Co For Gold	Radio	Almas Cap 2003	TV Pakt	Wagpapaligay	Gold & Gray in Green	Adig Tanging Ina	Sunday Family Circle	Interted Living				
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'Fearful' forecast

'White Book of Love' opens on GMA Network

His first feature film is written by Kevin Brodbin, Mark Bomback and Frank Capello.

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ENTERTAINMENT

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Blood came too late for 'Da King'

By Nini Valera

DOCTORS were supposed to operate on Fernando Poe Jr. to remove the blood clot in his brain a few minutes before the actor died last Dec. 14, according to Dr. Manuel Calayan.

Calayan, a surgeon who specializes in fat reduction procedures, told INQUIRER Entertainment last week that actors Philip Salvador and Gina Alajar, who had the same

Type O blood as FPJ, were getting ready to donate their blood a few minutes before the actor died at one minute past midnight.

Third-floor drama

The doctor, who said he is a family friend of the Poes, related the drama that unfolded before his eyes on the third floor of St. Luke's Medical Center where the Intensive Care Unit was located.

"A crowd had gathered in the corridor as Gina Alajar and I found our way to the ICU," recounted Calayan in Filipino. "Media people were barred, and they were only accepting relatives and friends of FPJ."

FPJ's doctor, Abdias Aquino, was Calayan's professor, Calayan said.

"He was looking for people who could donate Type O blood to FPJ for the operation," Calayan said. "Gina happens to be Type O. But they did not want to get her blood because she had just had her period."

"Another blood donor was Philip Salvador.

BLOOD/A3-2

FPJ's actor-friends Philip Salvador and Gina Alajar offered, but...



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Jessie Razon	ECHO	328	Andres Quiroz	ANDREA	281	Marcos	MARCOS	328
Roberto Hermoso	KRISTINE	328	Ella V	ELLA	291	Dary	DARY	328
Edson Parilla	EDSON	328	Jen Rasmussen	JEN	291	Ann Capin	ANN	328
Marvin Aguirre	MARVIN	328	Sharon	SHARON	291	Jacky Ferrer	JACKY	328
Dominic Dicks	DOMINIC	328	Alicia Aguilera	ALICIA	281	Angelina Aguilar	ANGELINA	328
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Kath Bunka	MARY	281	Dina Bonnevie	DINA	328	Patricia Garcia	PATRICIA	328
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New Living Asia Channel now airing 24 hours

HONG KONG-BASED broadcast service provider and content distributor Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited, PCM, has begun airing a new 24-hour television channel on its AsiaSat 3S platform, starting Dec. 1.

Living Asia Channel, a brand of Philippines-based content producer CCI Asia Group, offers visually engaging and highly insightful Asian travel and lifestyle narratives. On PCM's AsiaSat 3S high-power broadcast service, the channel is now available to viewers across Asia-Pacific and the Middle East.

The distribution of Living Asia Channel on AsiaSat 3S brings the channel to the best cable neighborhood and the largest home viewer base in Asia. PCM, in cooperation with CCI Asia Group, is the exclusive distributor to cable and DTH operators across the region.

Living Asia Channel's combination of English-language programming and a pan-Asian profile has proven to be attractive to Asia-Pacific cable operators seeking to diversify their content offerings. Pre-launch carriage agreements have been finalized with operators in Thailand and Taiwan.

In the Philippines, nearly half a million paying subscribers are already watching Living Asia Channel through



CCI Asia Group vice chair John Carl L. Magno (left) and Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited CEO Guenter Kring seal the contract at the Island Shangri-La Hotel in Hong Kong.

domestic cable and DTH operators. And in North America, over one million paying subscribers have access to Living Asia Channel through the TFC Direct and GlobeCast WorldTV DTH services.

Living Asia Channel's programs cater to a target audience age group of 25 to 45. The channel showcases the best of Asian destinations, finds, culture, cuisine, fashion, people, business, issues and investment opportu-

nities in Asia.

The distribution of Living Asia Channel in South Asia and North America is a joint venture of the CCI Asia Group, Mabuhay Satellite Corp. and GlobeCast Asia. In the Philippines, it is made available through the facilities of Dream Broadcasting System.

CCI Asia Group is a 7-year-old content producer specializing in travel and advocacy documentaries. Other TV brands that it has created are Isla TV (public service broadcasting), Juice TV (urban youth lifestyle programs) and Lakbay TV (the Philippines' first and only dedicated travel channel on cable TV).

Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited, a company privately owned by Richard Li Tzar-kai's Pacific Century Group, is a leading Asia Pacific provider of premium broadcast contribution and distribution services, as well as content management services. PCM's premium C-band MCPC broadcast distribution platforms are on Asia Pacific's most prominent satellites.

For more information, contact Sean Langston, Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited at +852-2965-1238, sean@pc-matrix.com, or www.livingasiachannel.net.



GINA Alajar, one of the Type-O blood donors

Blood came too late for 'Da King'

From page A3-1

But he looked pale when he offered his blood. We told him to rest for 30 minutes first before blood would be drawn from him. But FPJ died before that."

Calayan said he was able to enter the ICU while FPJ was still alive because he was a doctor.

"I just peeked," he said. "Susan [Roces, FPJ's wife] was beside him. She was so calm."

Then Calayan went down to give GMA-7's Arnold Clavio an update on FPJ's condition, the surgeon said.

It's true, he's dead

While he was on standby, Clavio received a call from GMA-7 reporter Lhar Santiago, who said FPJ had died.

"So I went up again to confirm the news," Calayan said. "I saw everybody on the third floor crying. It's true, FPJ is dead, I told myself."

The last time Calayan saw FPJ alive was during the presidential election last May, according to the doctor.

"My wife and I actively campaigned for him," said Calayan. "FPJ gave me his campaign pins, glasses and caps to give to my patients. He told me, 'bahala ka na diyan, Doc [You take care of these]'. That was the last time I spoke to him."

Calayan spoke to Susan last last week, during FPJ's wake at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City.

"She was still so calm," he said. "But she was telling us that she had planned to surprise him by refurbishing a house she had bought recently. They were supposed to celebrate their Christmas family reunion there."

Advice from 'Da King'

Former bold actor Mark Joseph told Inquirer Entertainment that he was among the other actors who had accompanied FPJ's body on its way from Arlington Memorial Homes in Pasig to Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City.

"I was with Philip Salvador, Rudy Fernandez and other actors when we brought FPJ to the church," said Joseph.

He said FPJ had left him a very valuable piece of advice.

"If it were not for him, I would have stayed a bold actor and not shifted to action films, which I did," Joseph said in Filipino.

"He once advised me to try action roles," the former "pene king" related. "He did not approve of bold movies. He said bold movies were no good."

Saying goodbye

Joseph said he took FPJ's advice seriously and made his first action movie, "Boy de Sabog," with Melissa Mendez as his leading lady.

He was remembering his conversation with FPJ about bold movies when he walked down the aisle of Sto. Domingo Church to take his turn to view the body of the king of Philippine movies, Joseph said.

"My knees almost buckled," he admitted. "I couldn't believe that he's dead. He touched my life the way he touched millions of people. He is really 'Da King.'"

Joseph also related that while he was seated on a pew beside the other action stars, he felt clammy and cold. But when he looked at Philip, the actor was perspiring.

"Then I felt a heavy pressure around my shoulders," Joseph said. "It felt like an arm, a gesture FPJ had always done when he talked to me. It must have been him saying goodbye to me."



PHILIP Salvador grow pale and had to be told to rest first.

JIMMIE RUIZALAN

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HIGH-SPIRITED gang (from left) Joseph Bitagcol, Maja Salvador, Mico Aytona, Michelle Madrigal, Rayver Cruz, Jiro Manio, John Wayne Sace and Serena Dalrymple.

High 'Spirits' on the set

SHOW
STOPPERBy Amy Mosura
Contributor

EXPECT anything on a TV set, especially where the average age of the cast members is 15.5 years old.

Possibly the last thing you'd expect to see is one of the cast members actually doing the job of a production staffer, as on the Calamba, Laguna, set of the new ABS-CBN teleserye, "Spirits." Clipboard and script in hand and headset stuck to his ears, Mico Aytona, 16, who plays resident clown Thor on "Spirits," today was doing another job as the series' assistant director.

"Quiet, we're about to roll tape!" Mico yelled before admitting to this writer in his normal voice, "I've always wanted to be a director."

And so it is on the set of "Spirits," the first regular TV project of acclaimed filmmaker Chito Roño. Best known for intelligent adult film dramas like "Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?," "Dekada '70" and his debut, "Private Show," Roño has always had a soft spot for family entertainment, as can be seen in his "Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure" and the "Spirit Warriors" movies. "Spirits" is an expanded prequel of "Spirit Warriors."

Like one family

The Christmas season was on everyone's mind, as the cast members reflected on the year just past, on the set of what many of them consider their biggest career breaks.

"I suppose all we want for Christmas is to entertain as many people as we can on this show, and that it lasts longer than anyone ex-



SMILING Serena

pects," said Rayver Cruz, 15, who plays Red. A former reporter for the children's magazine show "5 and Up," Rayver noted that the family spirit on the set made it a pleasure to go to work, even now, only a few days before Christmas.

"It's like a family here," he said. "We get a lot of chances to prove ourselves, and when we take risks, we're comfortable because we're on a set where everyone is supportive, and Direk Chito and the rest of the staff are responsible for making that feeling happen."

The respect for Roño was echoed by Maja Salvador, 16, who, as Gabby, is in her second consecutive ABS-CBN teleserye role after the recently concluded "It Might Be You."

"At first, we were all tense, even the ones Direk Chito had worked with before," said Maja. "But we've been working together for more than two months now, and we've all learned how he communicates what he wants."

"Direk Chito's generous with his time," she added, "so we understand what we're supposed to be doing at all times. That's hard to do in a special effects-heavy show like this, which also has complicated editing and stories that demand a lot from actors like us. Also, it helps that all of us are friendly."

Listen to what Direk says

For Mico, it's a chance to spread his wings in ways that being a member of Animé—a dance group of teen actors that also includes Rayver and John Wayne Sace—rarely affords.

"Like all directors, what Direk Chito wants is simple—for us to listen to what he says and do what he says, for the good of the scene."

"Which is why you're doing your little sideline-directing thing now," Rayver said.

"Actually, all of us want to take roles behind the scenes," said Jiro Manio, 12, the award-winning child actor who is playing his first teen role as Naro in "Spirits."

"That's true," said Rayver. "I want to be a cameraman."

"I was in the OB van a while ago," said Jiro. "I was giving Mico directions but he wasn't listening."

Jiro, those weren't directions," Mico retorted.

The acting thing

"We go inside the OB van sometimes and they let us observe the things they do while we tape, which is nice," added Star Circle Quest graduate Michelle Madrigal, 16, who plays Maya.

"I want to be an audioman and put the microphones on everybody," John Wayne Sace, 15, said in a mock leer. "That or utility."

"But of course, we all hope the acting thing pans out," said Joseph Bitagcol, 20, who plays Jesse the firestarter. "Thank God the ratings are getting higher. And we're hearing a lot of encouragement from people who have become fans of the show during the three weeks we've been on air. I hope it catches on some more, though, because it's a really good show. In my humble opinion, of course."

As far as Christmas wishes were concerned, the young cast was united, and surprisingly mature, in their hopes for themselves.

Said Jiro, "I wish everything would stay the same. That next year, we'd all still be friends and still be working together. Everything else we want to keep simple, because that's the best way to deal with everything in show biz. Just keep things simple."



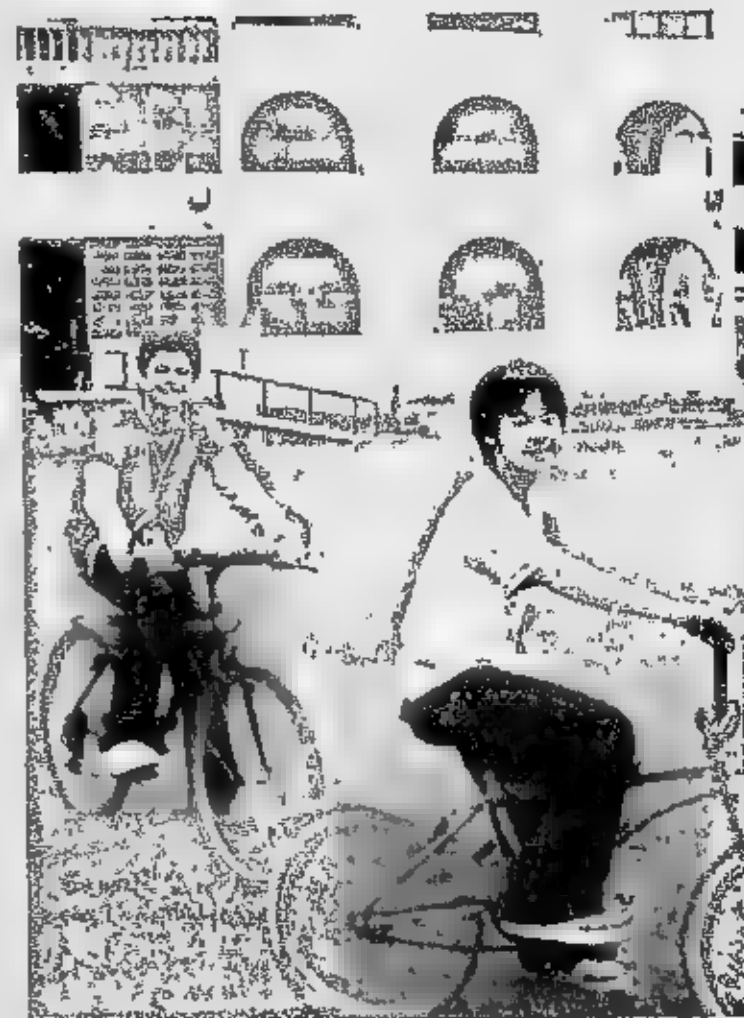
DAY JOB. Mico Aytona ("Thor") plays at being assistant director.



DIRECTED BY second unit director Cathy Garcia-Molina, Mico listens.



THREE'S NOT A CROWD. Mico, Maja and Joseph pause, and pose, on their way to the set.



PLAY TIME. Rayver and Jiro go bliding during a lull, in front of Calamba's Colegio de San Juan de Letran, which "plays" the Holy Spirit High School in the show.



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Sunday BIZ

Business Features Editor
 Margie Quimpo-Espino

SWISS uses his ear, finds RP a haven of talents for venture

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

SWISS national Uli Behringer grew up in a house where cutting edge technology and music came together like his favorite Rubinstein opus.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that when the founder of the world's 19th biggest pro-audio equipment manufacturer stumbled upon that unlikely combination in the Philippines, the 43-year-old Behringer decided to stay and set up a business.

It was the music first that lured the jazz loving Behringer to visit the country in 2001, after living for eight long, hard years in Hong Kong that left him burned out and semi-retired.

Behringer described those years as the most exhausting period in his life, and his sole source of fun was his Sunday jam sessions with Filipino friends at either the Mandarin Captain's Bar or Hyatt's Champagne Bar.

He always went home from those sessions exhilarated and with a growing admiration for the talents of the Filipinos.

Behringer, a classically trained pianist with a degree in sound engineering, then spent the next two years visiting the Philippines to continue jamming with more Filipino brothers in music.

But it was not until this year, when he met a friend who was in the electronics business, that he realized that music was not the sole talent of the Filipinos. They were as good in engineering.

With that realization came the idea to tap that depth of engineering talent to accelerate the growth of the pro-audio company that bears his name.

"I came here not knowing about the talent. I just started with just four to five employees to do simple jobs like graphic design," Behringer says.

"But over the next nine months, we grew the company here so much that we replaced



ULI BEHRINGER wants to put professional audio equipment within reach of musicians.

the engineers in Germany. Now, our 70 Filipino engineers design many of the products that we sell in over 120 countries," he adds.

The first product was an electric guitar and accompanying amplifier that is sold in the market for just about P6,000, and Filipino engineers are now busy putting the final touches to an affordable digital

piano and digital drums.

"As a student, it was always my dream to make music available to everybody, to make equipment available so that musicians can pursue their passions. And in this business, it is all about passion," Behringer says.

It was this passion that led Behringer to set up his company

in 1989 in Germany, where he took up classical piano and sound engineering.

He, however, traces its beginnings to 1986 in his living room, where he tried to build his own professional audio recording equipment since the ones available in the market were so expensive.

Building equipment from scratch is not new to the music engineer as many days of his childhood were spent helping his father build the world's first electro-magnetically controlled pipe organ.

Behringer spent countless hours of his college years listening and improving on his digital reverb until he was satisfied with the results.

When his friends got to sample his digital reverb, they asked him to sell him a similar piece of equipment. He, thus, ended up selling off his first production run of 20.

Two years later and armed with a college degree, he decided to make the manufacturing of professional audio equipment "with twice the features at half the price" his life's calling.

Behringer credits the father of his former girlfriend, who was a top executive of a food company, for helping him lay the right foundation for his company.

"He was my mentor and he treated me like a son. I remember he took me for a walk in the forest and shared with me the basics of the business. He told me to watch overhead costs, grow organically and go easy on credit," Behringer says.

He may not have ended up marrying his mentor's daughter, but he kept those principles taught in one of Germany's forest close to his heart.

Behringer adds that it was this mentor who encouraged him to put his name to his company.

"He asked me, 'do you believe in your company?' When I said yes, of course, he said then I should put my name on it. Look at the biggest companies, he said, they all bear the founder's names," he says.

That name is now known in the



BEHRINGER equipment bear the stamp of Filipino ingenuity.

music circles as among the most aggressive in the business.

Behringer also used the ear as its logo as the human ear is the best test of the perfect sound.

Thus, the tagline "Just listen."

From the 20 digital reverbs that he sold to his friends, Behringer pro-audio equipment is now available in over 120 countries. It was one of the first to cash in on the benefits of moving the production facility to China to cut on costs. Employees number 3,000, and growing.

Behringer also sees the long-term benefits of his decision to move one of the research and development centers to the Philippines.

"I want to hire as many engineers as we can. We are looking at hiring as many as 200 more employees next year. We are proud to say that many of the products we do are made by Filipinos, for the Filipinos," Behringer says.

He said one of the benefits of having Filipinos do the R&D is Filipino engineers test the equipment themselves.

It is not unusual to see Filipino engineers "strumming their pain" with their fingers at the Behringer Philippines office in Makati and not stopping until they were satisfied that they got the electric guitar and the amplifier just right.

"Most Filipino engineers are musicians, too. That is why they know perfectly what to do with the equipment," Behringer says.

Filipinos, after all, have high standards when it comes to music.

Aside from the electric guitar and amplifier, Filipino engineers have done research and development for loudspeakers—from small computer speakers to giant 2,000-watt speakers—to mixers for recording studios and lighting equipment.

"Next year, we will be producing digital pianos for just \$4,000," Behringer says.

Behringer says he could sell his products at a fraction of the cost of the competitors' because his company owns the supply chain—from the R & D to manufacturing and distribution. And there is no sacrifice on quality.

"We do not sacrifice features, on the contrary, we add," Behringer says.

Behringer says the company will be growing at a more rapid pace next year as more music lovers in the developed world demand recording equipment they could set up in their own homes.

And if Behringer will have his way, those homes will have Behringer equipment with the stamp of Filipino engineering excellence.

China's yuppies say 'I do' to diamonds

BEIJING—China's blushing brides-to-be follow simple rules when shopping for diamond rings. "The bigger the better, of course!" said May Yi, a Beijing professional, sitting down with her fiancée for a day of temptation and agony at a jewelry store in the capital.

The idea that diamonds symbolize a lifetime of love has taken root in China, a country that traditionally prefers gold and jade, and where precious stones were unimaginable luxuries just 10 years ago.

Driven by savvy advertising from South Africa's De Beers and a booming middle class, China has vaulted into third place in worldwide diamond jewelry consumption after the United States and Japan, according to the Diamond Administration of China.

"Maybe it's because I've been influenced by Western ideas, but diamond rings are really popular," Yi said. "It's become normal for everyone I know to buy them

when getting married."

The China market should overtake Japan within ten years and will also become the world's second-biggest cutting center after India, De Beers estimates.

Most Chinese can't afford a flawless stone set in white gold or platinum, but the sheer number of potential buyers is enough to draw investment from South African, Israeli and Belgian firms.

Japan, for the diamond business, is yesterday. America is today, because they take a big percent. But I think China will be tomorrow," said Liu Yansheng, China chair of Michael Diamonds, a partner of Cape Town-based Transhex.

The United States currently consumes about 42 percent of world's diamond jewelry, compared to 11 percent for Japan and nine percent for China, he said.

Diamond boom

The domestic diamond jewelry market, worth about \$1.2 billion

last year, is expected to grow between 15 percent and 20 percent in 2004, according to official figures.

The retail market is fragmented, but the wholesale market is dominated by De Beers, 45-percent owned by mining conglomerate Anglo American.

De Beers, blasted by critics for what they call unfair pricing policies, has been selling diamonds in China for industrial use since the 1950s. Some 80 percent of all diamonds are used as cutting or drilling tools.

But China's market for industrial diamonds—used in energy, electronics and medical applications—is relatively small, at between 70 million yuan (\$8.5 million) and 80 million yuan (\$9.7 million) a year, with flat growth, executives say.

Its own production of diamonds is tiny, so it relies on imports. Analysts say China may soon exert the same pull on the world diamond market that it

has on commodities, precious metals and crude oil.

Demand from China and Russia has helped boost diamond prices by 20 percent worldwide this year, experts and retailers say.

Voracious domestic demand has already caused a shortage of small but high-quality stones, says Inez Ding, president of Antwerp-based China Diamonds Manufacturing.

The wholesale price for a near-flawless, 10-point diamond (one-tenth of a carat) has soared 40 percent in just two years due to Chinese demand, she told Reuters.

Fledgling industry

China set up the Shanghai Diamond Exchange in 2000 to meet demand, but diamond executives say trading has been stone cold since its launch, with the vast majority of rough stones smuggled into the country to evade high taxes.

The exchange said it traded \$80.8 million of diamonds in the

first quarter.

Similarly, a 17 percent value-added tax has hurt efforts to create a diamond cutting industry, said Michael Diamonds' Liu.

Most of the diamonds now are cut in India, Israel or Belgium.

More than 20,000 people work in diamond polishing in China, with an annual volume of three million carats, De Beers estimates. China's official wholesale market in polished stones was worth \$377 million in 2003, it says.

De Beers is increasingly turning to China in order to reduce its dependence on diamond processing giant, India, analysts say.

"China is already the world's biggest jewelry manufacturing center. I think it will take us about 10 years to catch up with India," Liu said, against the din of workers hammering and polishing rings.

Michael Diamonds plans to set up a cutting center with several hundred workers, attracted by diamond workers' wages of

just \$60 to \$120 a month.

Perfect fit

At US diamond trader Ga.ace's sleek, 50 million yuan (\$6 million) Asian flagship store in Beijing, diamonds set in platinum are the flavor of the day.

Most customers are couples looking for wedding rings, but there's no shortage of people trying on pieces for themselves.

"When we looked around Asia to open our first store, we pinpointed China as the place with the fastest growth," Jerry Pea, vice general manager of Ga.ace China, told Reuters.

Luxury jewellers Cartier, a unit of Richemont, Bulgari SpA and LVMH are looking to expand in the Chinese market.

Carter flew in from Paris its Star of the South, a 128 carat diamond mined in Brazil in 1853, for the opening of its new China flagship store on Shanghai's historic Bund waterfront this month. Reuters



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Couple retires, creates health and beauty in a farm

By Maurice Malanes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Retirement, for many people, means sitting on their rocking chairs as they contemplate on what awaits them.

But for lawyer Damaso Bangaoet and wife Laurel or Bing, retirement is an opportunity to do freely what they had dreamed of doing when they were tied to their 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. jobs.

"You slouch on a rocking chair and your mind and muscles get atrophied. You should continue to be productive (even in retirement)," says Bangaoet, a retired executive vice president of the John Hay Management Corp. and former president of the John Hay Porto Point Development Corp.

Retirement is an auspicious time to launch one's second or third career, says Bing, a retired director of the Institute of Physics, Education and former acting director of the Center for Culture and the Arts at the Saint Louis University in Baguio City.

For the couple, retirement is a chance to do anything in the world, like traveling overseas, which they did and continue to do.

After having seen much of the world, the Bangaoets feel they must leave some worthwhile legacy for their own community.

From the couple's desire to leave a legacy and make an innovative business dent in their village, Tomay Farms, which was named after their barangay here, was conceived.

An experience

Tomay Farms, 7 km north of Baguio City along the Halsem Highway here, is not just a business proposition. It is "a community-based farm experience," says Bangaoet.

As an experience, clients or guests do not only munch on fresh organic vegetable salads, roasts and desserts; they savor them. When clients order lettuce salads, a staff runs to the garden to gather the vegetable so clients are assured of life-giving nutrients straight from a patch of organic earth.

Such is the cutting edge of Tomay Farms, which offers not only healthy and fine dining prepared by kitchen staff supervised by Therese Maulbecker, an international cuisine expert.

The place also offers other best things in life that many people usually ignore like smelling the flowers and watching the bees,



A GARDEN patch, which forms part of the ambience at Tomay Farms, 7 km north of Baguio City.

butterflies and the birds.

It helped a lot that the place sits on a more than 2,000-square-meter rolling hill, most of which are owned by the Bangaoets. Surrounded by pine trees that the Bangaoets planted more than 30 years ago, the place has been landscaped into an organic farm and a mini-park.

There are patches planted to lettuce, beans, strawberry, celery, parsley and various herbs like dill, lemon balm, mint, basil and many more. Surrounding these edibles are various ornamentals such as morning glory, various varieties of daisies, roses, birds of paradise, mums, dahlias, poinsettia, marigold, angel's trumpet, sunflower, and others.

On a fenced off 100-square-meter area, farm animals like chickens, ducks, goats and rabbits live together.

Above the animals' den is a fishpond, which will be filled with siapa fingerlings when the rain comes in May or June next year.

Part of the experience in Tomay Farms is not just dining, but also walking through the veg-

etable and strawberry patches, feeding the animals, learning to plant and asking questions about organic farming and its business side. Visitors can also enjoy conversations here over tea or Benguet coffee under a pine tree.

Business sense

The dining area and a mini-trade center, housed on a red-painted canvas-roofed structure beside the Halsem Highway, used to be a shabby auto repair shop with strewn tires and junk and where grasses and other vegetation were poisoned with spilled oil and gasoline.

Since the lot on which the former auto repair shop stood is the entrance to the Bangaoets' property, the Bangaoets convinced the owner to lease the lot to them. With a makeover, the place has made a difference along a highway where shops and stalls do not seem to care about flowers and greenery.

Tomay Farms is like a charming locus amid murky waters. This is not surprising because Bangaoet is an art critic and his wife is an artist

and both of them love and cultivate flowers, trees and vegetables.

As a former Camp John Hay official, Bangaoet conceived the Pangbenga or the Baguio Flower Festival, an innovation that has become a tradition, and which helps earn income for the Baguio City government and for the business sector.

Such innovation is reflected in Tomay Farms, where the stakeholders are not only the Bangaoets but the whole neighborhood as well.

Farmers from neighborhood farms like Beay's Garden, Jalopet's Garden & Pets, Doriano Farms, and Laurels and Trees sell their products at the Tomay Farms' trade center.

To free the participating farmers from undue pressures, the Bangaoets did not require rental for the use of stalls. The farmer-traders just give the Bangaoets 10 percent of their gross sales.

"This is a fair arrangement so traders won't have to worry over having to pay rent during the lean season," says Bangaoet.

"If they sell good, then everybody is happy. If they don't, everybody is sad, but at least

their stall is free."

Melting pot

Tomay Farms is also emerging as a melting pot of inter-regional products and talents.

Ednardo Gomez, a retired National Food Administration official and an in-law of the Bangaoets, and his wife would usually bring in dried seafood from Calbayog City and abaca crafts from their hometown in Daraga, Albay.

Cordillera artists also consign their artworks such as paintings, bead necklaces and wristbands, cards, wall decors and other souvenir items. Based on appointments, these artists can teach their craft to those interested.

Igorot knitters and weavers also trade their high-quality sweaters and other clothing.

Tomay Farms, which opened in November, continues to evolve as it seeks to make a difference in doing business.

And if the Bangaoets stress on the plural (farms, not farm) it is because other farmers are involved.

"More importantly we are not just farmers. We are friends and neighbors as well," says Bangaoet.

Such friendliness and neighborliness, which cannot be valued in monetary terms, are indeed among the bonuses clients and guests get to experience at Tomay Farms.



LAUREL "Bing" Bangaoet communes with her flowers at Tomay Farms.

Satisfying the Pinoy sweet tooth for 40 years

LIKE a treasured heirloom that is handed down from one generation to the next, the secret pastillas de leche recipe of Olympia "Lola Impiang" Sevilla is now in the hands of the third generation who keeps the legacy of Sevilla Sweets grand matriarch alive.

Now operated by granddaughter Gemma Sevilla-Alcantara, family-owned Sevilla Sweets continues to indulge the Pinoy's sweet tooth with pastillas de leche and other confections that are tastefully and distinctly Pinoy.

According to Alcantara, their products are popular with the locals and balikbayans. Sales peak during Christmas season and in August.

"That's the end of summer vacation in western countries when balikbayans hoard Sevilla Sweets products before going

back abroad."

To meet demand for their sweets, the company put up stores in Metro Manila. Main store is in San Miguel, Bulacan, while five branches are in Shangri-La Mall, Mandaluyong City, Robinsons Galleria Quezon City, Green Hills Shopping Center, San Juan, Sta. Lucia East Center, and the newly opened Market! Market in Fort Bonifacio.

As proof of its product quality and popularity, Sevilla Sweets was specially handpicked by the Department of Trade and Industry to represent Bulacan at the Fiesta Market in Market! Market.

Sweet beginnings

Like most flourishing enterprises, Sevilla Sweets bespeaks of humble beginnings that brought forth success.

"Back in the '60s, Lola Impiang

used to serve coffee creamed with fresh carabao's milk, the surplus of which she used in preparing her own recipe of pastillas de leche. She owned a carinderia near a market located along the old national road," Alcantara related. The murky confection became a hit and Lola Impiang had to increase her output to satisfy customer demands.

After some time her family was forced to relocate to an area near the present national road—a minor setback that turned to be a blessing in disguise.

With no more than P70 in his pocket, Alcantara's father—the former San Miguel Mayor Santiago Sevilla—resumed the family's small pastillas business. What little capital they had, the Sevilla's augmented with penny-pinching and hard work until the business grew.

"My parents used to say that the more they have kids, the more their business improves," she recalled.

The relocation proved to be a positive twist. Their customer base expanded, jacked up by transit motorists from Manila traversing up north and North Luzon locals going to Manila. Eventually, the Sevilla's had to put up a bigger store and kitchen.

At the start only three people, all family, were engaged in the business. Now they have 12 candy makers and 15 sales people in six stores. Working in shifts, production of sweets only ceases two days in the year on Good Friday and Christmas Day.

Other sweet variations

From Lola Impiang's pastillas, the family's product list expanded to include other Pinoy fa-

vorites, made more special with Sevilla Sweets' distinctive touch.

"We all added our own recipes. My contribution is yema with caramelized sugar in the middle—a nice surprise," said Alcantara. Plus other pastillas de leche variation with keso langka and mango, poivaron flavored with pineapple, pandan and melon, and various tarts. "Her sister's contribution was turones de kaniya."

Alcantara shares their best sellers are pastillas de leche, ube and yema.

Secrets of success

Since they're popular with balikbayans, Alcantara dreams of going into exports in the future. "We wanted to export but we have yet to learn how to prolong the shelf life of our products. But they're getting there. We have orders from as far as Cebu."

Alcantara cited prayers, hard work and maintaining product quality as their recipes for a successful trade. "I make it a point to pray before the day starts and at the end of the day."

She also stresses the importance of hard work and the need to practice what she preaches to her children and staff. "I always encourage them to give their 100 percent. We don't accept the 'puede na yan' attitude. 'As the one in charge of quality control, I even personally taste all the products every morning'."

When asked to divulge her Lola's secrets in creating yummy pastillas, this she said, "Carabao's milk. It's pure, smells delicious and a whole lot creamier than cow's milk."

(For inquiries, call 722-1002 in Manila or 0440-764-0250 in Bulacan.)

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NO AN SWEAK

INQUIRER contributor Rico Hizon is 2004 Most Outstanding Kapampangan awardee for Media. Hizon anchors BBC World's Asia Business Report. He is a graduate of journalism of De La Salle University. Photo shows Rico, wife Melanie Syquia, Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid, and Jose and Leonora Hizon, Rico's parents.


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**ODA-funded project seeks
Project Director**

with strong project development and local
governance background

Job Description

The Project Director shall:

- ✓ be responsible for overall management of a program of skills transfer, training and advice on project development and management for local government units and local institutions.
- ✓ market the project services to qualified LGUs, line agencies, training institutions and other potential partners.
- ✓ manage, coordinate and administer Project funds to achieve Project goals and objectives.
- ✓ report directly to the NEDA Regional Director in Caraga and the Donor's Department Program Manager

Qualifications

- ✓ Minimum of seven years experience in designing and implementing training programs for LGUs particularly in project identification, feasibility study preparation, project financing, project prioritization. Direct involvement in social marketing for public services. Experience with an international organization an advantage. Knowledge of government procurement system and auditing/accounting rules and regulations an asset.
- ✓ Graduate of MBA, MPA, MAEcon or related field.
- ✓ Excellent communication skills both written and oral.
- ✓ Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to gender and development.
- ✓ Willing to be assigned in Caraga for the next three years.

Send your application letter with resumé and photo on or before Monday, January 10, 2005 to:

The Regional Director
NEDA Caraga Regional Office
Ninfa Tito Bldg., J. Rosales Avenue
Butuan City
Email: neda13@beyond.com or neda13caraga@yahoo.com



Republic of the Philippines
MARINDUQUE STATE COLLEGE
Tanza, Boac, Marinduque

Please be informed that the MARINDUQUE STATE COLLEGE (MSC) Board of Trustees announces the opening of the position of

College President

The following are the qualifications for the position:

1. Filipino citizen
2. Preferably Doctoral Degree holder
3. Preferably not more than 80 years old at the time of appointment as President of the College
4. Have at least five (5) years of managerial capability
5. Morally upright

Applicants are required to submit clearance from the following:

1. Ombudsman
2. Civil Service Commission
3. National Bureau of Investigation
4. Sandiganbayan

Applicants are also required to submit the following:

1. Detailed Curriculum Vitae
2. Vision-Mission for the College
3. Nano Exam
4. Medical Certificate

Interested applicants are requested to submit 5 (copies) of formal application, and all requirements on or before January 26, 2005 to:

Com. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina or Mrs. Proserpine M. Mabio
Commission on Higher Education or Search for MSC Presidency
DAP Bldg., San Miguel Avenue Marinduque State College
Ortigas Center, Pasig City Tanza, Boac, Marinduque
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VICTOR S. VITTO, SR. Ed.D.
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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
(Head Office)

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites interested general building contractors currently with Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) License to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project described below.

Project Title

Proposed Rehabilitation & Upgrading of the Assembly Hall, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Floors

Scope of Work

Rehabilitation and upgrading of the Assembly Hall, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Floors including the following: 1. Structural repairs and reinforcement; 2. Electrical and plumbing works; 3. Painting and finishing; 4. Sanitary and ventilation works; 5. Other works necessary for the completion of the proposed rehabilitation and upgrading of the Assembly Hall in accordance with the approved plans and specifications and subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.

Project Location

At the BSP Head Office, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Floors, 1000 P. O. Box 24, Manila

Source of Funding

From the BSP General Fund

Contract Duration

Minimum 90 days (90 days)

Minimum Requirements (Criteria)

PCAB License

Contractor's Construction Experience

Should have completed within the last five (5) years (1999 to present) at least two (2) projects involving similar works and construction of commercial buildings, including high-rise and multi-story buildings, with a minimum of 10 stories, and a minimum of 10,000 square meters of floor area.

Certification of Bidder's Financial Soundness

Should be able to submit audited financial statements for the last two (2) years, showing a net worth of at least P10,000,000.00.

Net Financial/Contracting Capacity

At least Twenty Nine Million Pesos (P29,000,000.00)

Capital of Firm

At least Two Million Nine Hundred Thousand Pesos (P2,900,000.00)

Date of Issuance

January 5, 2005

Deadline of Submission

January 14, 2005

Notice of Eligibility/Qualification

January 17 to 18, 2005

Date of Issuance

January 21, 2005

Pre-bid Conference

January 21, 2005, 9:00 AM

Venue

MRTA 2nd Floor, BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. O. Box 24, Manila

Submission and Opening of Bids

February 18, 2005, 10:00 AM

Deadline of Submission

February 18, 2005, 10:00 AM

For information, please call BAC Secretariat

Telephone No. 521-7011 local 3143.

The venue for the issuance and submission of accompanied eligibility statements and bid documents is at the BAC Secretariat

Room 204, 2nd Floor - Five Storey Building BSP Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. O. Box 24, Manila, 930 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Records for issuance of action of eligibility/qualification up to deadline of submission of bids may be subject to change.
The provisions of Republic Act No. 9164 on Implementing Rules and Regulations relative to the bidding and award of contract including its implementation shall apply.
BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any defect or informality therein, or to accept such bid or award any part thereof to any contractor whose bid is evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obligated to compensate/return the contractor for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.
(Sgd.) MA. DOLORES B. YUNICO

Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 19 & 26, 2004)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The Public is hereby notified that MRS. LYDIA M. VALERA whose picture appears above has a pending case for Qualified Theft before the Ilagan, Isabela Regional Trial Court Branch 17. Accordingly, an Order for a Warrant of Arrest was issued by the said court.

Any information therefore on her whereabouts is appreciated. Please forward any information that may help lead to her arrest/apprehension to M. Lhuillier Pawnshops, Inc. - c/o Mrs. Myrna S. Gimenez at (02) 894-39-69 and (02) 813-70-04 to 09 and RTC Branch 17 Tel No. ().

(PDI - Dec. 26, 2004)



Republic of the Philippines
Province of Kalina
Municipality of Tinglayan

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

Date: _____

Contract ID No. SP-066-IN-01

World Bank Loan No. 4446 PH

1. The Government of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development towards the cost of Local Government Finance and Development and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the Contract for the Construction and Repair of School Buildings. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.
2. The Municipality of Tinglayan, Province of Kalina invites sealed bids from eligible sources for the Construction of 2 units - 2 classrooms @ barangay Bugnay and Barangay 1 unit - 3 classrooms @ Poblacion Tinglayan and Repair of 2 units - 2 classrooms at barangay Sumdal.
3. Bidding documents may be purchased starting December 27, 2004 to January 25, 2005 from 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM at the Municipal Treasury Office during office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) Municipal Hall Building, Tinglayan, Kalina upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand pesos (P5,000.00) or its equivalent in a freely convertible currency, for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.
4. Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after bid opening and must be accompanied by security of One Hundred Seventy Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P170,500.00) in a form of cash, certified check, bank guarantee or its equivalent in a convertible currency, and shall be delivered to the Office of the BAC Secretariat, Treasury Office, Municipal Building, Poblacion, Tinglayan, Kalina Province on or before 10:00 am, January 25, 2005 at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.
5. A pre-bid conference will be held at 10:00 A.M. on January 11, 2005 at the Sanggunian Bayan Session Hall, 2nd Floor, Municipal Building, Poblacion, Tinglayan, Kalina Province.

(Sgd.) Engr. Roberto A. Chualsi
BAC Chairman

(PDI Dec. 26, 2004)


NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT MS. SUSAN A. LLANES WHOSE PICTURE AND ADDRESS APPEAR BELOW HAS CEASED TO REPRESENT THE PHILIPPINE AMERICAN LIFE AND GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY IN ANY CAPACITY WHATSOEVER IN VIEW OF THE EXPIRATION OF HER AGENCY CONTRACT LAST APRIL 11, 2001



MS. SUSAN A. LLANES
Nansuagao, Cagayan, 2700 Ilocos Sur

ANY TRANSACTION MADE OR ENTERED INTO BY THIS PERSON FOR AND IN BEHALF OF OUR COMPANY AFTER APRIL 11, 2001 IS NOT VALID AND WILL NOT BE HONORED BY US.

(PDI - December 26, 2004)



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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
THE CITY OF OLONGAPO
Olongapo City Hall
Rizal Avenue, Olongapo City

INVITATION TO QUALIFY AND BID

The City of Olongapo is inviting interested parties to qualify and bid for the Olongapo City Public Utilities Department Modernization Build-Operate-Transfer/Lease Participation Project ("Project").

The Project will be implemented as a Contract-Aid Operation (CAO) scheme under the BOT Law and will comprise (1) the performance of rehabilitation works on the City-owned electric power distribution system, (2) the planning, financing, design, engineering, construction, maintenance, testing and commissioning of new electric power distribution facilities, and (3) the management, operation, repair and maintenance of the integrated distribution system by the winning bidder/contractor for a concession period of 25 years. The updated and rehabilitated power distribution system including all new facilities shall be transferred to the City, at no cost, at the end of said period.

The competitive bidding for the Project will be conducted in accordance with the procurement guidelines of the BOT Law (Republic Act No. 6957, as amended by Republic Act No. 7718) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The bidding will follow the rules prescribed for the Simultaneous Qualification of Bidders or the Three Envelope System, as defined in the IRR.

The Tender Documents (consisting of the Information Memorandum, Instructions to Bidders, Bid Forms and Draft Agreement) may be obtained from the Public Utilities Department, Olongapo City Hall, Rizal Avenue, Olongapo City, starting on December 18, 2004 up to January 10, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00). Only those who purchased the Tender Documents will be qualified to submit bids or proposals.

Bidders are invited to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on January 21, 2005. The deadline for the submission of bids or proposals is on January 31, 2005.

The City reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding or not award the contract for any justifiable and reasonable grounds where the award of the contract will not redound to the benefit of the City.

The City also assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense incurred in the preparation of their bids or proposals.

(Sgd.) MANUEL QUIJANO
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI Dec. 19 & 26, 2004)

No more 'knocking on doors and tapping on windows'

By Amy R. Remo

NOBODY wanted to apply for The Electrolux Group when it first posted its job openings for sales people in 2001.

Everybody thought it was a job that would require one to "knock on your door, ring on your bell, tap on your windows too..."—its ad campaign in the '80s.

"We had to post another ad without our company name just to get applications. In 2001, we only had seven sales people in our organization," recalls Vichai Lorattawoult, president of Electrolux Philippines Inc.

After it stopped selling its products in the country in the late '90s, Electrolux came back in 2001 as part of its worldwide expansion.

Electrolux is the world's largest producer of powered appliances for kitchen, cleaning and outdoor use such as refrigerators, cookers, chain saws and garden tractors. More than 55 million Electrolux products are sold each year in more than 150 countries.

This time, however, there were no more sales people knocking on consumers' doors when Electrolux was relaunched in April 2002.

Instead, Electrolux products were made available for the first time, in mass retail stores with Electrolux and White Westinghouse as its carrier brands.

After two and a half years, the company made a complete turnaround from the Electrolux people used to know.

Lorattawoult says the performance of Electrolux has more than met their expectations.

"We have already achieved one of our short-term goals, which is to become one of the market leaders in this country," says Lorattawoult.

Electrolux now has about 500 dealers nationwide and is expecting 2004 sales growth to be six times its sales in 2002.

Its bestsellers are refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Refrigerators account for 70 percent of the company's total sales, with about 40,000 to 50,000 units sold this year.

One of the reasons for their success, according to Lorattawoult, is having a strong brand.

Lorattawoult explains that although the Philippine market is still young for some of its innovations such as the cordless vacuum cleaner, he believes that the market is continuously growing and that sales would soon pick up.

Another reason for our success is having better after sales services, particularly in product repairs, says Lorattawoult.

He says that even before they started reselling products in the country, they have been providing after-sales services to their clients.

Electrolux also provides necessary facilities for these services.

"What differentiates us from the rest is that we have all the spare parts readily available," says Lorattawoult.

While it may take weeks or even months for centers to repair other brands, repair of Electrolux appliances may only take a few days.

Lorattawoult adds they provide adequate training to people in every authorized service center to ensure that products are handled well.

"Another key reason for our success is having well-trained personnel in our organization," says Lorattawoult.

For three days, each personnel is trained about the organization and its products. He or she will then have to undergo an on-the-job training before being assigned to an outlet.

But it does not end there, according to Lorattawoult. Each month, there is an ongoing training for all personnel about product knowledge of both new and old products, as well as about "frequently-asked questions."

They are also given regular updates regarding current company situation and market movements.

"We have to constantly refresh their memory about all our products to ensure better service to customers," says Lorattawoult.

Plans for 2005

As for 2005, Electrolux plans to expand its distribution to include other places in the Visayas region such as Tacloban and Davao, and also in Northern Luzon, particularly in Ilocos Norte.

Lorattawoult says the company wants to tap the smaller cities and the surrounding islands in these areas.

"We would like to increase our dealers by at least half (from the current of about 500) so that our sales in the provinces would match sales in Metro Manila," says Lorattawoult.

To date, 60 percent of the sales come from Metro Manila, while 40 percent are from the provinces. Sales in one Metro Manila outlet is usually equivalent to sales of several outlets in the provinces.

Lorattawoult adds consumers could expect more product innovations from the group.

They will also open new outlets, hire more people in the sales force and provide "promoters" in each outlet.

A "promoter," according to Lorattawoult, is a sales person equipped with adequate training regarding Electrolux products. Each outlet has at least one promoter to help it sell Electrolux products.

In line with this, Electrolux will be beefing up its training for employees so employees will meet international standards and be

at par with other Electrolux employees worldwide.

You have to take care of the people in the organization because they are the ones who drive the business, says Lorattawoult.

He says cross-culture opportunities are highly possible for Filipinos. In fact, several of them have already been assigned to handle regional assignments.

Lorattawoult adds they want to be the "preferred employer" or the company of choice, which is evident right now in the hundreds of applications they receive for each job posting they put up.

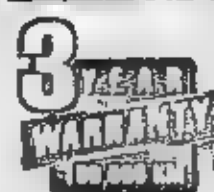
He shares that some of the applicants are already managers and high ranking officials in top multinational firms.

LORATTAWOULT: Having achieved our short-term goal, Electrolux now sets its sights to becoming the market leader in each country in the years to come.



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"IF WE do not take care of the sea, the backlash would be on us. We should not only take from the environment, we should also protect it," states Maximo Abesamis, 67, one of the biggest names in the aquaculture business in Pangasinan.

Fish cage pioneer asks operators to take better care of the sea

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The aquaculture industry is considered environmentally hazardous, but the pioneer of fish cage operations in the country said the industry will not harm the environment if operators "take care of the sea."

"It's all a matter of taking care of the sea, and this means taking care of the soil in the seabed," Maximo Abesamis, 67, one of the biggest names in the aquaculture business in Pangasinan.

Abesamis, an agriculture graduate of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and who introduced the fish cage technology

in the country in 1995, has been convincing his fellow aquaculture operators to "invest a little in taking care of the sea because it is the source of our livelihood."

"If we do not take care of the sea, the backlash would be on us. We should not only take from the environment, we should also protect it," Abesamis said.

He cited as example what happened in 2002 when a massive fish kill hit Bohol town because of pollution caused by the aquaculture industry itself.

He was barely affected by the fishkill.

How did he do it?

"By following certain systems and using certain products that

protect the soil," Abesamis said, adding that he practices "demand feeding," uses "extruded feeds" and applies "good bacteria" on the seabed below his fishcages.

In 2002, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources pointed out that overfeeding bangus (milkfish) stocks in the fish cages had resulted in the accumulation of decomposing materials in the seabed, causing widespread pollution that killed millions worth of bangus.

Most operators were not really into agriculture or fishery. But lawyers, doctors and other professionals joined the bandwagon when the fish cage industry was at its peak.

"They get a caretaker who

knows no better about the industry and caretaker gives feeds to the bangus nonstop," he said.

Abesamis practices "demand feeding." "When the bangus stops eating, we stop giving feeds so nothing is wasted and nothing accumulates in the seabed," he said.

He uses "extruded" feeds which are 100-percent cooked as compared to pellets which are 20-30 percent cooked.

"Because extruded feeds is fully cooked, it is absorbed better by the fish. It has a higher protein content, and is easily digestible which results in shorter growing period for the bangus. Extruded feeds also mean the wastes from the bangus is easily decomposed," he said.

Superbowl aims to double restos by next year

SUPER Bowl of China ends 2004 with three new branches, bringing to eight the total number of its outlets. Super Bowl of China opened its newest branch at the Promenade in Greenhills, San Juan, a few days before the new year. This came just four months after the restaurant expanded its operation with the opening of two branches in August 2004.

Super Bowl of China-Greenhills covers 200 square meters with a seating capacity of 144 and offers a new choice in dining destination for the various market segments around the place—families, students, workers, and executives in San Juan, Pasig and nearby areas. The location of the new branch is near many shops and stores, cinemas, theater and the famous Greenhills bazaars that is a year-round crowd drawer.

Big Buddha Restaurant Inc. (BBRI) which operates Super Bowl of China (and the Big Buddha Restaurant in Greenbelt 3, Makati) is targeting to open at least eight to nine more stores in 2005 or double the current number of its branches. Already three new stores are scheduled to open next year in Gateway Mall, Cubao; Tomas Morato, Quezon City and in Blue Wave, Mankina.

BBRI managing director Richmond Yang believes this target is attainable given the strong following the restaurant enjoys and the success of the branches that opened this year.

Yang believes exploring strong and meaningful ties with the right partners is necessary to accelerate growth and expansion, hence in July 2004, it decided to open its doors to potential franchise partners—and rightfully so, considering that global business trends reflect a strong growth area in evolving franchising, with three times higher level of profitability and success rate compared to starting a new business. The Philippine franchising industry is one of the most developed in Asia, with restaurant and fast food chains as leading franchising businesses due to the impressive growth in the food sector.

In July 2004, Super Bowl of China embarked in major activities meant to prepare its management and operations staff for the demands of franchising. Two major activities include an intensive

MyRestaurant marketing seminar to level up the franchising skills of its personnel and staff and its participation in the F3 Franchise Fair 2004 exhibit mounted by the Association of Philippine Franchisers Inc. (AFFFI) held in July 2004.

After five successful branches in SM Megamall, Jupiter Street in Makati City, Glorietta 4 in Ayala Center, Chiefs Avenue in Festival Mall, Alabang and at the 2nd level of SM City North EDSA, Super Bowl of China's first franchise outlet opened in

Greenhills, San Juan. The new branch is a testament to the company's commitment to expand its footprint in the Philippine market.

Super Bowl of China's expansion strategy with targets opening more branches is part of the company's commitment to bring the Super Bowl of China's

signature Asian fusion cuisine to more diners across the country. The company's commitment to quality and service is a key to its success.

Sustaining public patronage is definitely a key to the company's success. The company's commitment to quality and service is a key to its success.

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ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: Prospective applicants must be a citizen of an ADB developing member country, be proficient in oral and written English communication skills to be able to pursue studies, have at least two years work experience, have gained admission to an approved course in a designated institution, be in good health, not more than 35 years old at the time of application. (Staff of ADB and the designated institutions and their close relatives are not eligible to apply).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS: Applicants should obtain application forms from the designated institutions of their choice; submit the completed application form and required documentation to the Institution, indicate on the application form that the applicant wishes to be considered for an Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship. (From among those admitted by the institutions, ADB will select candidates for award of scholarships. A separate application to ADB is not necessary).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT THE ADB-JSP website: <http://www.adb.org/jsp>



HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION

INVITATION TO RE-BID

The Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC) is inviting all interested parties to participate in the re-bidding of this long-term lease for the property described below pursuant to the decision of the HGC Board of Directors to re-bid the same:

PROJECT	VILLONGGO AREA NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CENTER—COMMONWEALTH ENTERPRISE ZONE PROJECT
LOCATION	COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, QUEZON CITY
AREA	8,222 SQ. M.
MINIMUM BID PRICE	P80.00 per sq.m. per month
LEASE PERIOD	25 years

The schedule of bidding activities is as follows:

Issuance of bid documents including eligibility requirements	January 10, 2005
Pre-bid conference	January 17, 2005
Start of submission of eligibility requirements	January 24, 2005
Deadline of submission of eligibility documents and opening of eligibility documents (Pass/Fail Criteria)	February 7, 2005
Issuance of notice of eligibility	February 10, 2005
Deadline for submission of bids and opening of bids	March 10, 2005

The bidder is advised to inspect the subject property to determine its actual condition. Particulars of the bidding may be obtained from the Secretariat, Asset Disposal Committee-Villonggo Area, NGC-CEZP at the 4th Floor, JADE Building, 335 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Makati City. Other inquiries relative to the bidding may be made at tel. nos. 897-32-90/897-32-88.

Bid documents shall be available to interested bidders starting January 10, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P20,000.00. Eligibility requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope to the Secretariat, Asset Disposal Committee-Villonggo Area, NGC-CEZP on or before February 7, 2005. The opening of the eligibility envelopes will be held on February 7, 2005 at 10:00 A.M., the last day of the submission of eligibility documents.

Sealed bids should be submitted to the Secretariat Asset Disposal Committee - Villonggo Area, NGC-CEZP on or before 10:00 A.M., March 10, 2005, at the 4th Floor JADE Building, 335 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Makati City.

The sealed bid should be accompanied by a bid bond equivalent to 10% of one year rental in the form of cash or certified manager/cashier's check payable to HGC.

THE HGC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL OFFERS; TO WAIVE ANY DEFECTS OR TO ACCEPT SUCH OFFER AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE CORPORATION.

(Sgd.) ARTHUR G. TAN
Chairman
Asset Disposal Committee
Villonggo Area, NGC-CEZP

(PDI- Dec. 18 & 22, 2004)



Professional Regulation Commission Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Professional Regulation Commission, with address at P. Parades cor. N. Reyes sts. (formerly Moraya St.), Sampaloc, Manila, hereby invites interested bidders to apply for:

Items to Bid for 2004 requirements	Approved Budget for the Contract	Date/Venue of Pre-bid Conference	Non-Refundable Fee
Printing and Supply of Professional Identification Cards (PRC ID Cards) (6 Months)	P 7,500,000.00 Not less than 250,000 pcs. (Supply for 6 Months) at P30.00 per card	January 7, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Floor, Main Bldg.	P 1,000.00
Printing and Supply of Computerized Application Forms (CAFs)	P 313,500.00 Not less than 180,229 pcs. At P1.74 per sheet of Bookpaper	January 7, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Floor, Main Bldg.	P 1,000.00
Printing and Supply of OMR ID/Answer Sheets	P 3,644,200.00 Not less than 1,370,000 pcs. at P2.66 per sheet of OCR paper	January 10, 2005 10:00 a.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Floor, Main Bldg.	P 1,000.00

Only bidders registered with the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) for procurement of goods shall be allowed to participate in the bidding process. Bidders may obtain the list of the registration requirements for procurement of goods at the Office of the BAC Chairperson, Commissioner Leonor Tripon-Rosero, 2nd floor, PRC Main Bldg., starting on December 20, 2004. Deadline for submission of registration requirements shall be at 5:00 p.m. on January 3, 2005. Issuance of Certification of registration to bidders for procurement of goods shall be on January 10, 2005.

Bid forms and the Terms of Reference (TOR) may be obtained by interested bidders starting on December 20, 2004 from the Office of the BAC Chairperson with a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00.

All particulars relative to the registration, eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids, and awards of contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act (GRPA), and its implementing rules and regulations.

The Commission reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract if there is a prima facie evidence of collusion between the officials or employees of the Commission and/or between the BAC and any of the bidders, or if the collusion is between or among the bidders themselves, or between a bidder and a third party, including any act which restricts, suppresses or nullifies or tends to restrict, suppress or nullify competition; if the BAC is found to have failed in following the prescribed bidding procedures; or for any justifiable and reasonable ground where the award of the contract will not redound to the benefit of the Government.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) ALCESTIS M. GUIANG
Chairperson

(PDI- Dec. 18 & 22, 2004)

HOKI SUBIC CORPORATION

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ASST. PLANT MANAGER

Male/Female 30 and above. A graduate of any Engineering / Business Administration related courses in any prestigious Universities in Manila preferably a Masters Degree holder. Must have minimum of 3 to 5 years experience in Manufacturing firm. Can speak Mandarin, Fokien. Should be fluent in English. Can work in a minimum supervision and willing to work overseas.

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OBITUARIES

Manuel A. Roxas High School Class '51
Sampaguita Chapter #3, OES
Catholic Women's League, Singalong Chapter

In Memory of

Rosa Blanca Jimenez-Roca

who joined her Creator on 17 December 2004
at St. Francis Medical Center, Lynwood, Ca., USA

She will be lovingly remembered by her husband, ERNESTO, and children Preciosa Blanca, Celeste Blanca, Melinda Blanca and Gerardo Ernesto, together with their spouses and children.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati City.
Interment is on 29 December 2004 at the Jimenez-Roca Mausoleum, Manila North Cemetery.

ENGR. SANTIAGO H. ROA

(July 25, 1925 to Dec. 14, 2004)

His bereaved children: DRA. EVELYN ROA-IGNACIO, JANE ANDOQUE, BRENDA PADUA, VIVIAN MALUBAY, GERARDO ROA, ATTY. JOY ROA, GILDA BERNARDINO, JOSEPH ROA, JOSEPHINE ROA and EMMANUEL ROA, and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

He is survived by his wife JOCELYN LOPEZ-ROA and his brothers PETRONIO ROA and PAULINO ROA.

His remains lie in state at the St. Joseph Chapel, Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Dr. A. Santos St., Sucat, Parañaque City.

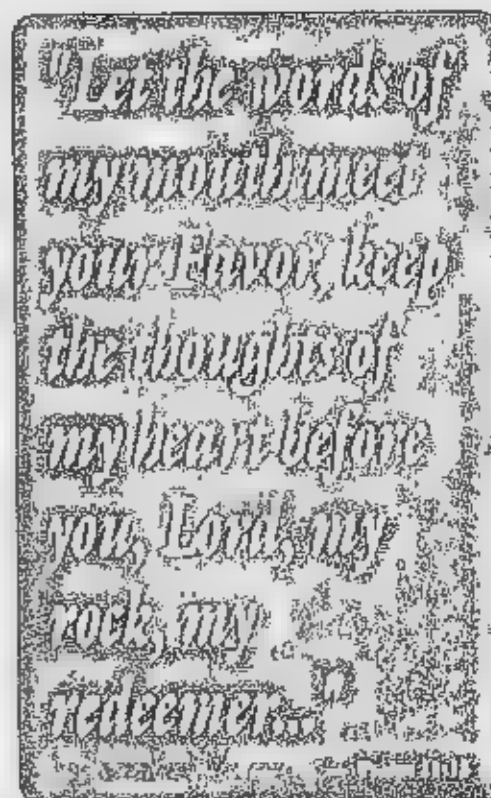
Interment will be on December 30, 2004, Thursday 9:00am at the Manila Memorial Park, Dr. A. Santos St., Sucat, Parañaque City.

MANILA MEMORIAL PARK

Leading the Way



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DAVAO CITY / (82) 225-0091 to 92



Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all their joys of my life, and I will dwell in the
house of the Lord forever... Psalm 138:8



We, the family of beloved

TAN POK HUI

(Tan Book Tong / So King Hui)

(April 30, 1928 - December 6, 2004)

wish to express our profound gratitude for your spontaneous love, sympathy and support
in his passing on December 6, 2004.

We find strength and are humbly grateful to you all in knowing that he touched so many
lives in his concern for others. He will continue to live in our hearts and through the
lives we lead us testament to his legacy of love.

Thank you very much



An obituary with a picture
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2004



Sunday LIFE STYLE

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Having a Party?
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BJS Compound
1869 P. Domingo Street, Makati City

How Christmas cards revive our forests

By Rowena C. Burgos

BECAUSE of creative ways to keep the donations coming, nonprofit foundations have kept their advocacies, especially now when corporations are tightfisted, government funding

is scarce and donors suffer from fatigue.

For a nonprofit corporate-led foundation such as the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), hard times call for enterprise and creativity. "It was in this light that the foundation implemented the Christmas Card Fund Campaign in 1991 to raise funds for the reforestation of Cebu Hilly-

HOW/12

Lifestyle salutes the PBSP's project that raises funds for the greening of cities by printing and selling student-designed Yuletide cards



CHRISTMAS card designed by Mylene Stephanie J. Lacson, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

IN THIS ISSUE

SEA
Princess
says hello
to Kitty

/D2



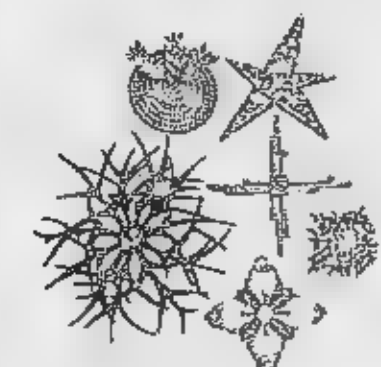
CANDID couples

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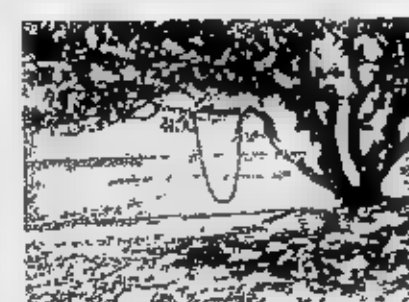
THE
BOHEMIAN
look is
back

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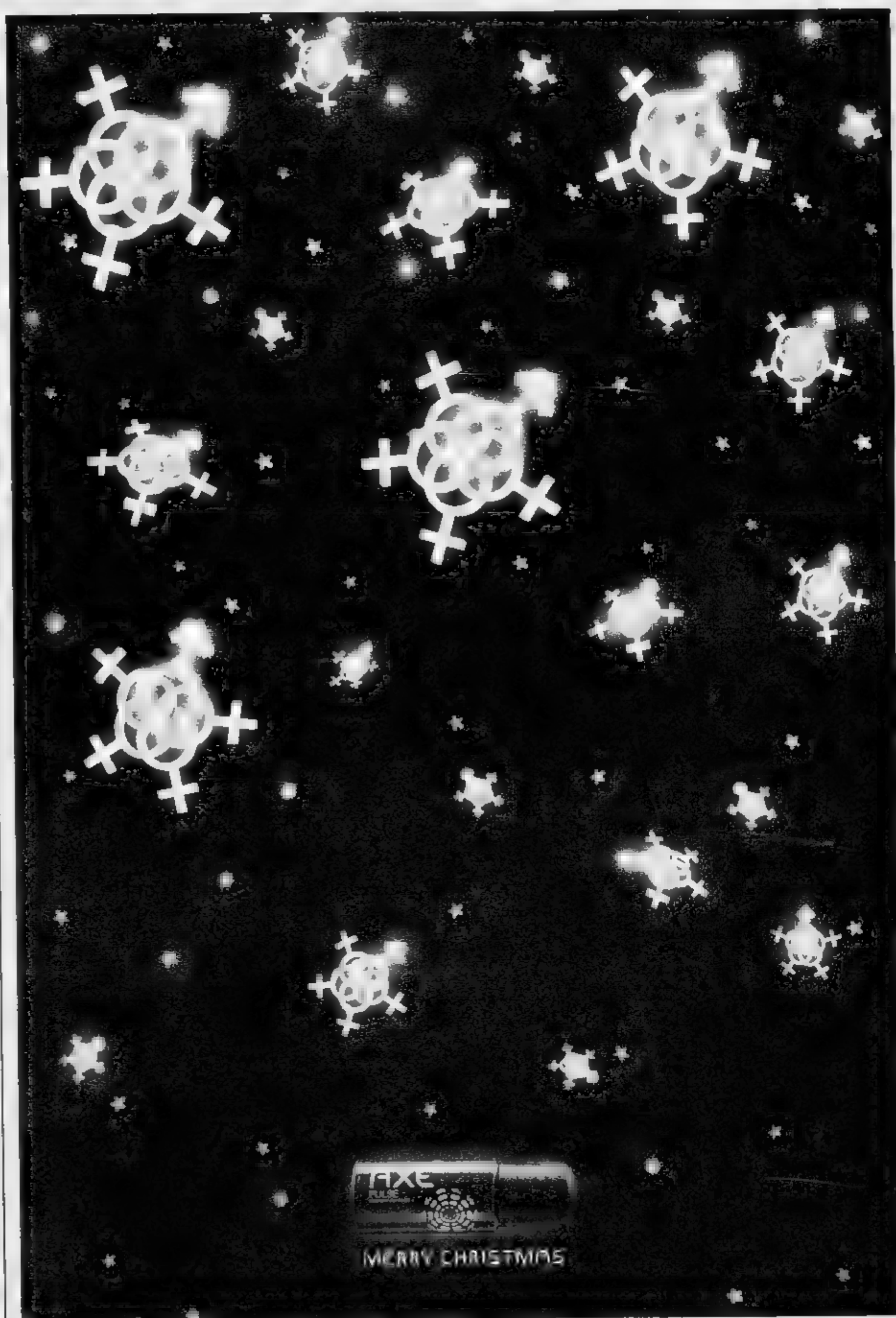
LIFE and style
2004 roundup

/G1



UP and down
the sandbox

/H1





LANISSA M. del Cano, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)



How Christmas cards revive our forests

From page C1

land and Bago Upland in the Visayas," says Ruth Monculada, PBSP chief of corporate communications.

To date, PBSP has generated more than P1 million by selling Christmas cards. The income has financed the planting of approximately 150,000 trees of different species and the reforestation of about 60 hectares of land.

The project won the 2001 Anvil Award of Merit by the Public Relations Society of the Phils. This is all part of the PBSP's Cebu Mananag Watershed Management Program, which, aside from reforestation, provides marginal upland farmers with farm productivity techniques and enterprise development training.

Christmas card

Every year, PBSP conducts a design-a-Christmas card contest among college students in Cebu and Bacolod. The winning designs are used as Christmas card covers.

Each card is 15.25 cm x 22.25 cm when spread. The PBSP logo, name and description of the foundation, and the identity of the artist are printed at the back. Each card costs P20 and every recipient of the card will have a tree planted in his name in PBSP's reforestation sites in the Visayas.

There are also card designs and customized texts for companies interested to have their exclusive Christmas cards. A company can buy a design for P10,000 and own the artwork originally submitted by the participating student. In addition, 500 trees will be planted in the purchasing company's name.

This year, the four winning designs were by Rowena Dablo, University of Cebu; and Mariel Joy de la Serna, Jay-R Delleva and Emil de la Cruz, all students of La Consolacion College in Bacolod. Other designs were done by Ivan Richard Deligero of the San Carlos Seminary College; Ma. Theresa de la Cruz, Jazheila Magbanua, Mark Michael Curativo, Mylene Stephanie Lacson, Jennefyn Magbanua, Hershey Lim, Kristone John Bayoneta, Larissa del Rosario and Brian Josue Rene Lomugdang, all of La Consolacion College in Bacolod; Rayboy Atterado and Wesley Akeem Espina, University of the Philippines Cebu College; Mitchell Bucong, University of San Carlos; Jenifer Beloy, Cebu State College of Science and Technology; and Neil Gabriel Esgara, Cebu Institute of Technology.

These students were awarded cash prizes.

"This ongoing program hopes to increase the density of trees located in PBSP reforestation sites of Cebu Hillyland and Bago Upland in Negros Occidental," Monculada says.

PBSP was organized in 1970 by socially responsible business people as a response to the socioeconomic crises. The foundation has since been the corporate sector's vehicle in delivering assistance to landless farmers, fisherfolk, rural workers, urban poor and indigenous cultural communities.

From an initial membership of 50 companies, PBSP has grown to more than 170 members. It has worked with some 2,900 partner organizations, and provided over



NEIL Gabriel B. Esgara, Cebu Institute of Technology



JENEFER Beloy, Cebu State College of Science and Technology

P4.8 billion in financial assistance, which has supported more than 5,000 projects that have benefited close to 2.5 million poor Filipino households from 65 provinces.

Today, corporations are broadening their focus and taking responsibility for the condition of society. "I think there is a certain amount of responsibility for corporations to get involved in social activity beyond the everyday activity of doing business," Monculada says.

Call the PBSP Visayas Regional Office (032) 2325283 or 0918-9214709.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph

MARK Michael E. Curativo, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

Bikers' run for toys

SOME 350 kids from the Laura Vicuna Foundation, the Visayan Forum and the Open Heart Foundation got a special treat recently from members of the Motorcycle Advocates of the Philippines (MAP).

The bikers organized a run to collect

toys, as well as clothes, for the children who came from homes assisted by the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ned Hourani, MAP ex-president and president of the Freedom Riders Motorcycle Club, organized the event.

Motorcyclists from various clubs assembled at the Ateneo Car Park and gave the kids a ride on their bikes, to the Rock-

well Club tent.

Entrance fee was a toy. Some 700 toys and 300 pieces of clothing were collected.

The 250 or so motorcyclists brought friends and families to the event.

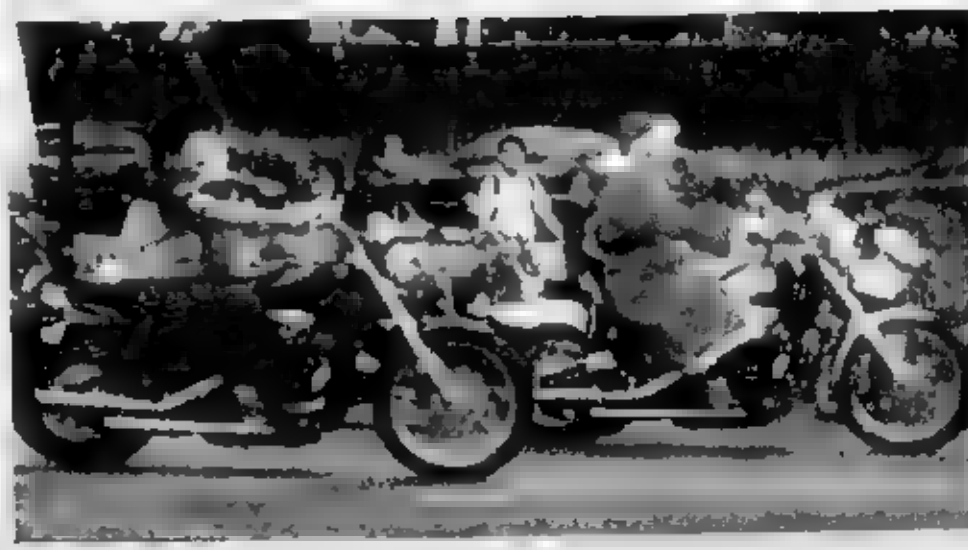
The party at the tent featured clowns, party booths, ice cream from Nestle, candies from Candy Corner, games, shows and surprises.



ADVENTURERS Motorcycle Club



FUN, food and games for the kids and their families



SANTA gives the kids a ride on the motorcycle.



THE CENTURY Park Hotel (CPH), together with Nestle Food Services and Nestle Ice Cream, spread holiday cheers recently to the orphans of Asilo de San Vicente de Paul at the hotel's ballroom.

Communications and media manager Toti Palileo and sales managers Andy Hipolito and Ferdie de Leon brought the orphans to the hotel on buses of Morning Star and Oversea Central.

The children immediately had their photographs taken with Santa Claus who came all the way from Finland. They then enjoyed their *merienda* of spaghetti, barbecue, chicken lollipops, mini burgers and iced tea.

Gill handed out the gift packs with the help of Santa Claus. The packs contained Nestle products like candies, cookies, cereals and noodles, and toys from Century Park.

Asilo's Sister Medly gave a short thank-you speech and the children performed song and dance numbers during the program.

Also assisting during the event were CPH marketing director Angel Sunday, beverage manager Ricky Chavez and other executives and employees.

[illegible]

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APPLES Aberin-Sadhwani

A hassle-free but elegant table setting

THE ALABANG Town Center held a two-week Holiday Table Setting Exhibit to give helpful tips to prospective hosts and hostesses.

The Home Zone area became a colorful showcase of table settings for Noche Buena by Ayen Munji-Laurel, Ana Rocha-Castillo, Apples Aberin-Sadhwani and Agot Isidro-Sandejas.

Munji-Laurel gave a glimpse of Christmas Eve in the Laurel home through her classic and opulent setting. She used furniture and accessories mainly from Georgian Lane, Play & Display, Area Home Store, Home & Beyond, and Rustan's. Her place settings featured a profusion of vibrant red tones.

Singer and television host Isidro-Sandejas opted for a minimalist approach. Her clean and uncluttered design used items from Store One, Cerezo, Dimensione, Play & Display, and Area Home Store.

Architect and interior designer Rocha-Castillo had children in mind in her setting. She combined expensive crystal from Rustan's, furniture from Play & Display, Shell Canvass, and Store One, with affordable finds from True Value, for a whimsical setting dedicated "to the child in all of us."

Model and INQUIRER columnist Aberin-Sadhwani gathered vintage and modern pieces from Jo-Liza, Silahis Arts, Herencia, Home Essence and Play & Display to create a shabby-chic-inspired Christmas setting with a fun and feminine edge. A student of the Philippine School of Interior Design (PSID), she used purple and pink tones to create a relaxed yet elegant look.

The exhibit displayed the diverse tastes and distinct styles of the four designers.

Other stores that provided decorative pieces for the exhibition were Balibayan Handicrafts, Blims Furniture, Dwellings, Infinite Walls, Make Room, Quintessence Gallery, Richwei Gift Collection, Robles Heritage, Tesoro's, The Flower Farm, and Zwilling J.A. Henkels.



Misha Bernardino, ATC division manager



Javi Hernandez, ATC general manager



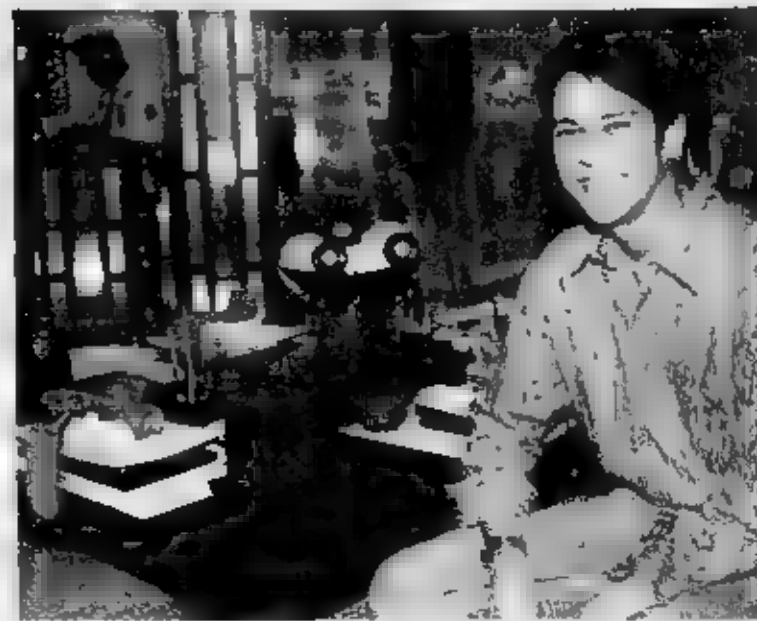
AYEN Munji-Laurel

Sunday LIFESTYLE Home

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Text us your feedback: inquire life name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)



ANNA Rocha-Castillo with her niece Misha Bernardino, one of the inspirations for the design



AGOT Isidro's holiday setting design was presented by her husband, Manu Sandejas.

Salina Sa

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Prizes Daily	Winners Daily
P500 load	20
P2,000 SM Gift Certificate	10
Nokia 3315 Cellphone	10
Philips DVD Player	5
Philips 25" Real Flat TV	3
Honda Wave 125 S with AHD	1
Total Daily Winners	49

Draw Dates

week	cut-off dates	draw dates
1	Dec. 05, 2004, 11:59 PM	Dec. 06, 2004
2	Dec. 12, 2004, 11:59 PM	Dec. 13, 2004
3	Dec. 19, 2004, 11:59 PM	Dec. 20, 2004
4	Dec. 26, 2004, 11:59 PM	Dec. 27, 2004
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SMART



SMART family Rosanne Prieto, Martin Nievera, Boy Martinez and Anton San Diego



KITTY friends, Maurice Arcache, Daphne Oseña, Pepper Teehankee, Jofi Dingcong, Swatch boys Matteo Guidicelli and Borgy Manotoc



FAMILY affair. Alyanna, Liezl, Alisa and Alfonso Martinez with Marilu Martinez



HAPPY couple Irene and Randy Francisco

Kitty and I

WHEN it comes to event launches, I normally arrive in the nick of time. At the Hello Kitty One-of-a-Kind Museum, I donned my new Swatch in support of Gift Gate queen Virgie Ramos and appeared just in time to introduce the guests of honor with my co-host, INQUIRER Super's Tim Yap, all bubbly in a pink jumpsuit.

Over a thousand entries of the Kitty T-shirt contest were displayed in revolving mechanisms and the winning entries were modeled by reed-thin, teeny-bopper models—the sort that made me feel old and fat, though of course still cheery in my hot pink outfit. Pinoy creativity took center stage in the Kitty room of happiness, all filled with different designs. It really is a must-see on the ground floor of Glorietta 2 between Guess and Replay.

I was interviewed by a kid's feature show of GMA 7, called

TESSA!

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

"Lovely Day," on why I have this fascination over Hello Kitty considering I may not even call myself a young adult anymore. Initially, I was into Kitty because of my six-year-old, Kitty-crazed daughter Annika, but I realized Kitty is more than a toy or accessory because of the happy spirit her items have from the handbags to the tiaras and everything else in between. And if we can spread cheer in any small way to anyone, it truly is a wonderful feeling.



CEO at play. Manny Pangilinan with Gift Gate's Virgie Ramos

Ottoman empire splendor relived

THE CEBU chapter of La Chaine des Rotisseurs marked its 11th anniversary with a formal dinner at the Rosal ballroom of the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort. The theme took 72 guests on a journey back in time to the ottoman empire in all its splendor.

Plans for the transformation of the ballroom was shrouded in oriental mystery. Florist Pinky Chang and the resort's top PR people, Neil Rumbaoa and Jaja Chionghian, came up with a scene worthy of the most opulent seraglio at Topkapi.

Lanterns of opalescent raw silk cast soft lights on tables covered with shimmering brocades of all colors. Pine crystal, china and silver added sparkle. So did piles of cushions in gold lamé strewn over rich Persian carpets. All tables had centerpieces overflowing with fragrant roses and lilies, clusters of vegetables, sprays of brilliant crystal beads, and bunches of grapes and tiny radishes that came in handy between courses.

Sultana rules

Amid a crowd of lovely ladies in clinging gowns and ablaze with jewels, and men either in tux or elaborate barongs, weaved Madame la Baili of the Cebu chapter, Amparito Lhuillier, who presides over EOrdre Mondia. des Gourmets Degustateurs, a complementary organization to La Chaine.

CEBU CEBU
Jaime Picornell

Fred Frank Fricke, president of the Philippine Bailage of La Chaine, arrived from Manila. Even before he tasted a morsel of the delectable menu prepared, which he carefully perused, he announced, "You have put Cebu on the gastronomic map of the world."

Full attendance

In her words of welcome, Amparito noted the hundred percent attendance of the chapter officers—Chef Dietmar Dietrich, Dr. Julian Divinagracia, Al Evangelho, Teresing Mendezona and Dr. Nestor Alonso.

The Mactan Shangri-La's general manager Tim Wright and his wife, Mona, sat at the presidential table together with Michel and Amparito, Mr. Fricke, Jesus and Rosebud Sala, Michael and Rose Hennessy.

The resort's resident manager Daniele Vastolo and his wife, Serine, sat with their best friends, Michael and Joanna Lhuillier, and one of the most beautiful women in Cebu—Jris Fernan Arcenas.

Our table had its share of luminaries belonging to some of Cebu's oldest and most prominent families—Margie Lhuillier, Myra Gonzalez y Osmeña,

Quennie Malingin Aman, Chona Bernad, Dr. Lydia Aznar Alfonso, and Julia Urbina, escorted by Dr. Ricardo Urbina.

Mayen Tan, who was the first Baili of the Cebu chapter, was present, seated with Al E, Kenneth and Rachel Lim, Tita Trillo who came from Manila for this, Debbie Enriquez, Marina Codina, Peter and Hermie Cullen.

Martin Kleager came from Hong Kong, where he is connected with the Union Bank of Switzerland. Among those at his table were Vivina Chiu Yrastorza, Cebu City Councilor Jack Jakosalem and his wife, Sharon, Tony and Grace Lozada, Bess Ortiz and Ramon Makilan who was back with City Sports Club after a stint abroad.

Also from Hong Kong was Mariquita Salimbangon Yeung, but Carlos couldn't make it. Benjie Diola pinch-hit for him. They had quite an animated table, what with Teresing M, Dr. Divinagracia, Anna Paulin, Tessie Javier, Stella Bernabe, Dave and Joy Sharpe there.

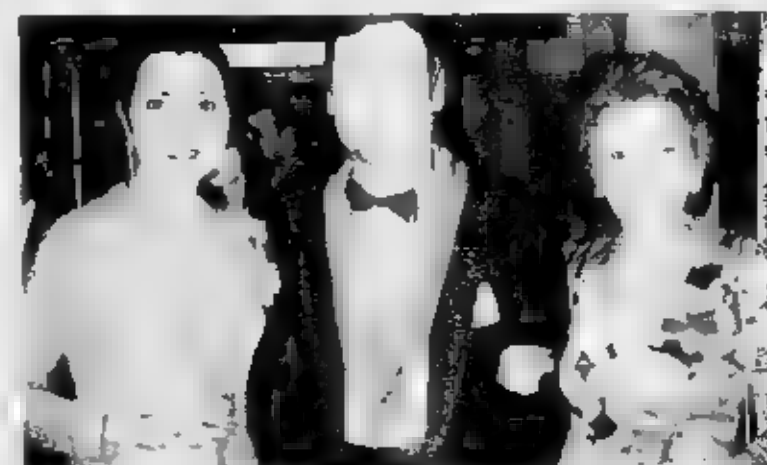
Romantic couple

Mila Demecillo asked Mariter Damon Klepp to the party, and she looked terrific. She would be inducted as a new member in February. Most romantic couple of the evening was undoubtedly the Marriott Hotel's general manager Karl Hudson and star-lesque Rose Amores.

One couldn't help telling Tim Wright this event had had the best pre-dinner reception. Moët & Chandon champagne flowed



CHONA Bernad, Cecilia Rodriguez, Myra Gonzalez and Maria Codina



AMPARITO and Michel Lhuillier with Teresing Mendezona

Middle Eastern music played all night. It intensified when a sinuous belly dancer with tulle veils appeared. Would anyone care to dance? She beckoned with graceful hands. Michel L. readily accepted.

Cigars, liqueurs, and chocolate bonbons were served. That was a sign for everyone to get up, mingle, and get persuaded by the exotic sounds to try a bit of dancing till way way past midnight.

like it was going out of style. (It's usually some ghastly sparkling fizz that you got.) Executive chef Adam Rozmaryniwics was congratulated for the excellent food, a culinary travelogue of lands once ruled from the Sublime Porte in Istanbul. The scallops for starters were a la Constantinople; the baked garoupa, Armenia; the green pea and mint soup with quail Erzurum; the mangosteen sorbet flavoured with rose, Kasta-manou Where's that?

Main dish was lamb loin cooked the way they did it in Anatolia, which was a bit rare. Were we in Angora when desserts came? From wherever they might have come, they were delicious—baciava, marinated figs, and pistachio ice cream.

Start 'em young

By Serapion S. Metilla
Contributor

GOOD gardeners are not only born, but also made. It is important that, at a young age, children are exposed to plants and flowers.

Don't underestimate children. They can be good gardeners if they are well-guided, encouraged and motivated. In most cases, when father and mother are passionate about vegetable patches, trees and other plants, their children eventually become good gardeners.

Children actually just love to play with soil and do gardening. Their interest has to be carefully cultivated, just like plants. It is advisable to give them an area where they can practice growing vegetables and ornamentals, es-

pecially flowering plants. Praise them for their efforts and give them incentives. Let them understand and realize the benefits of growing flowers and vegetables.

There are many ways to introduce children to gardening. You can start by making a window box or planter. Better yet give them a small space in the garden. Provide them with the necessary tools, equipment and other needs. Let them choose what to plant—vegetables, ornamentals, cacti and other succulents or herbs are just some of their op-

See to it that the area chosen for a kid's garden gets sunlight and has readily available water supply. It is also advisable to teach them the principles of soil preparation and the importance of composting.

Teach them the right mixture for composting, such as this formula: one part garden soil, one part river sand and two parts compost. Teach them how to use kitchen waste and other recyclable materials like dried leaves, hedge clippings and the like.

Never allow the children to use chemical pesticides. Show them the advantage of a porous mixture and let them understand suf-

ficient drainage to prevent water-logging.

Teach them correct distances or spacing between plants. Encourage eco-friendly gardening techniques and the use of organic fertilizer. Let them understand the bad effects of pollution.

Select seeds or seedlings that grow and flower fast, like petunias, Vinca rosea, marigolds, celosia, cutasita, gabi-gabihan,

santan, and vegetables, among others, for kids to practice on.

Bring your children to the Ecology Learning Center in Quezon Memorial Circle, QC. Foundation president Charito Planas says the center aims to show urban residents what they can do for food security and a green environment.

Planas and the center's employees are willing to give free

lectures on organic, vermiculture (earthworm propagation) and the wise use of tight-space garden planters. They also demonstrate recycling of trash, mushroom growing, composting, medicinal herb gardening and backyard fishpond management, among others.

Contact the author at 9394593.



UPLB: Makiling's caregiver

AFTER we mentioned conservation efforts at the La Mesa Watershed, we got word from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) that there were also water-

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda



conservation and ecotourism promotion. He is also a professor of forest botany and a plant taxonomist at UPLB's College of Forestry and Natural Resources.

(Why aren't people like him chosen to head the Department of Environment and Natural Resources?)

Among the first things he told us was that there were six watersheds in the forest area, serving Calamba, Los Baños and Bai in Laguna, and Sto. Tomas in Batangas. There were 60 perennial and intermittent streams. Eight water systems tapped those streams for domestic use.

Caretaker of an ecosystem

The center does not only look after the trees but also the wildlife, the flora and fauna in the area. Makiling, Dr. Fernando said, was a center of biodiversity. Given the urban spread around it, we realized if he and his colleagues so much as blinked, they might find their forest reserve turned into a graveyard of naked stumps or turned into malls and high-rise buildings.

Fortunately, no one is blinking at UPLB. Dr. Fernando said, apart from a mixed dipterocarp rain forest and mossy forest, the MFR had more than 2,000 flowering plants, 291 species of ferns, 211 of mosses and hundreds of algae and fungi.

It was home to 181 species of birds, 45 of mammals, 22 of amphibians and thousands of insects and arthropods, 65 of reptiles (lizards and snakes) including newly recorded endemic ones—Beyer's skink (once found only in Zambales) and Cuming's mabouya.

Much of the flora of Mt. Makiling is showcased in MFR's Botanic Garden, a protected haven for flora and fauna. At the Botanic Garden, we took a trail where we experienced a real forest ecosystem, along which flowed gushing streams and creeks, and where every



DR. NOEL ABRAHAM and his team inspect newly discovered growths of *Rafflesia Manillana* in the Makiling Forest Reserve.

now and then a bright-colored bird we'd never seen before flitted overhead. Our hosts made sure we didn't miss it.

Bird sanctuary

We stopped at the Center for Philippine Raptors (the Philippine hawk eagle and the great Philippine eagle, among them). The cages were not yet filled up. Most of the inhabitants came from animal lovers who sent those found injured or captured to MFR for safekeeping and veterinary care. The Botanic Garden is one of Makiling's ecotourism sites, open to trekkers and picnickers.

Dr. Fernando stressed that the MFR was primarily "a training laboratory for the advancement of scientific knowledge on forestry and natural resources." Conservation was an important mandate, keeping MFR officials on their toes as they made sure there were no threats to the forest ecosystem.

The threats might come in the form of illegal settlers or acts of vandalism. For added protection, a buffer zone was measured long ago setting a demarcation line between the MFR and the outlying areas.

Not just a university

The UPLB is a many-splendored institution managed by dedicated Filipino scientists. In one aspect, it is a regular university offering college courses; in another, it is a very specialized institution where study and care of its immediate natural environment are main concerns.

There are laboratories for all kinds of experiments and researches, from agro-forestry to bees, to biotechnology, butterfly breeding, crop protection, dairy training, down to waste treatment.

The book "The Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve

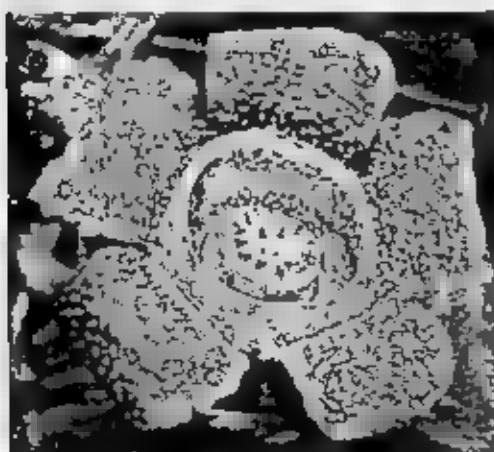


Development Initiatives & Management Experience," written by professors and experts from the College of Forestry, said: "The (MFR) is a small mountain which can serve as a window to other mountain ecosystems."

To Dr. Fernando, Makiling was "a brand name" not only for its beauty but also for the quality of its forest and environment, the economic, aesthetic and ecological benefits derived from it, as well as its long academic and scientific history. He called further attention to the diversity of the MFR in his new book, "Flowering Plants and Ferns in Mt. Makiling," (sponsored by Korean scientists), illustrated with colored photos on every page. Although not for sale, it is already an important reference source for studies on the Botanic Garden in particular, and of Philippine flora in general.

There is much more to UPLB than space will allow, but we intend to go literally further afield as soon as feasible.

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com



THE EXOTIC flower *Rafflesia Manillana*



AERIAL view of the Batangas side of Mt. Makiling. The lower portion is heavily forested, the upper portion shows the industrial zones of Batangas.

Para sa

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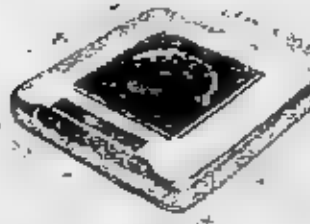
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FIRST PRIZE
winning entry
titled "Twin
Kiss" by Jun
Garcia of
Navotas

Candid romance

By Cheche V. Moral

SMILE! You're on candid camera!

Weddings are happy events, and nothing reflects this better than snapshots that capture the couple and their guests in off-guard moments, in situations sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, sometimes awkward, sometimes downright embarrassing. More often these are the photos that don't make it to the official wedding album. But these same photos best preserve the joyousness of the occasion, when the photographer and guests with cameras just click away without prompting their subjects to "Smile!"

The "Candid Wedding Photo" contest of the INQUIRER's Sunday Lifestyle, Canon Phils. and cbv7 Media Master sought exactly this sort of photographs. The contest was swamped with over 3,000 entries from professional and amateur photographers. It is one of the run-up events to the "Wedding March at the NBC Tent" on Jan. 22-23 next year.

Of the entries, the top 3 and 10 consolation-prize winners were chosen by the panel of judges composed of Canon Phils' senior manager Vincent Sanchez, INQUIRER chief photographer Ernie Sarmiento, photo editor Boy Cabrido and the Lifestyle editor.

The top entry was sent in by a 44-year-old freelance wedding photographer from Navotas.

Jun Garcia's "Twin Kiss" shows the bridal couple caught in a lip-lock while dancing, their two young attendants mimicking them.

Garcia, who was into buy-and-sell before becoming a full-time photographer in 2000 ("Buy-and-sell is boring," he said) took the shot from a wedding in San Pablo City, Laguna, last October. For his entry, he will take home Canon's latest professional digital camera worth P260,000, the EOS 1D Mark II DSLR, launched only a few months ago.

Garcia took the winning photo with a Canon 10D, bought only last August. "I like

Here are wedding photographs to make you smile, laugh, cry and fall in love

to use film, but clients now demand that you have a digicam," he notes. The San Pablo wedding was only the second he covered with his new digicam.

Old romance

The second prize is awarded to Fulgencio Rana Jr. of Makati City for his entry "For Adults Only."

The photo shows a seemingly embarrassed elderly woman, seated next to a smooching couple in the bridal car.

The woman is the bride's grandmother, according to Rana. "She was very game," he said. "She laughed when I told the couple not to show their tongue." Rana took the shot slumped on the floor of the limo.

For his shot of the Perez-Navarro wedding last year at the Santuario de San Jose in Greenhills, Rana will get a Canon 10D kit, worth P99,500.

A banker by day and wedding photographer on weekends, Rana, 38, espouses candid or non-traditional wedding photos. He says the trend started with the wave of digital photography, and modern Filipino couples are catching on.

He still takes traditional wedding pictures, but Rana has observed couples today also want a "totally different output. They like coffee-table-book type of wedding albums. They like to see the fun part of the occasion."

Dewey Sergio, 53, of San Pedro, Laguna, will take home the third prize, a Canon 300D kit worth P60,000, for his entry "Hot Na Hot," taken in a *balikbayan* wedding held at Caleruega Dominican chapel in Bat-

CANDIDO EX

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Rocker & Recliner

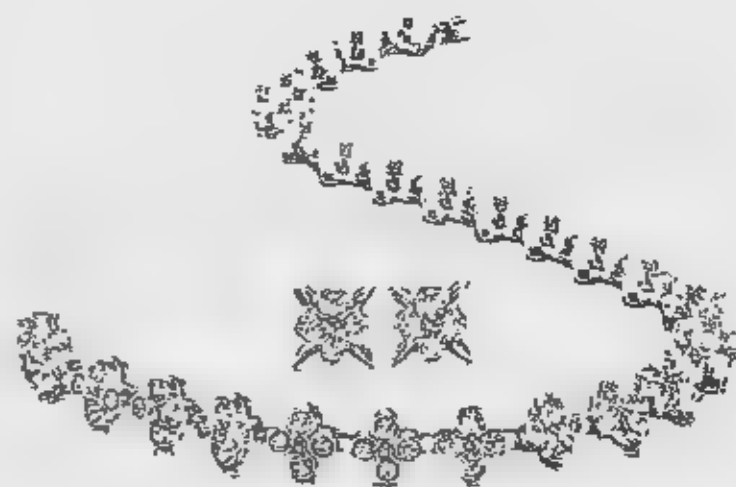
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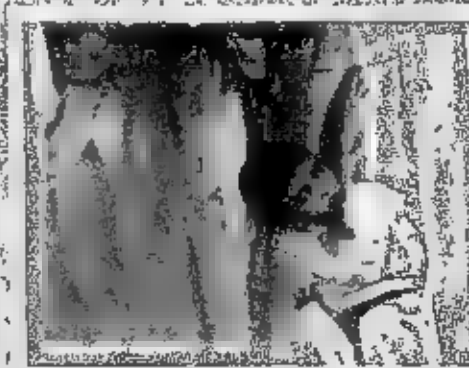
"FOR ADULTS Only" by Fulgencio Rana Jr. of Makati City, second prize



"HOT Na Hot" by Dewey Sergio of San Pedro, Laguna, third prize



"TEARS of Joy" by Reynaldo Acasio of Bacoor, Cavite



"WHAT'S the Fuss?" by Bobby Timonera of Iligan City

Candid romance

From page E1

ulao, Batangas, a few months ago.

A 20-year veteran who has worked in advertising and sports photography, Sergio went into full-time wedding coverage only two years ago. He said he began introducing candid photography (or "photojournalist-type" shots as he calls it) to his clients because "mas nakakabuo ka ng storya. Mas masaya and litrato."

"Kalog kasi yung laiki kasi balikbayan," Sergio said of his subject in his winning entry. It shows the groom dipping his bride as if in a dance, planting a kiss on her neck, instead of the traditional altar kiss.

Ten consolation prize winners will each receive gift certificates worth P2,000: "Peek a Boo" by Rosemarie Razon of

Malate; "That's It" by Benjamin Villabona of Parañaque City; "Newlyweds Meet Newlyweds" by Luis Naguit of Makati City; "Tears of Joy" by Reynaldo Acasio of Bacoor, Cavite; "Kill-kili Power" by Edith Esquerro of Makati City; "Ooops!" by Bernard Mejias of Quezon City; "What's the Fuss" by Bobby Timonera of Iligan City; "Take It Easy" by Jose Antonio Reyna of Tacloban City; "Crying Ladies" by Edward Simon of Sta. Ana, Manila; and "Ahi Oh!" by Arnel Garcia of Antipolo City.

The winning entries will be exhibited at the "Wedding March at the NBC Tent" in January, when the prizes will also be awarded. The bridal fair is a joint project of Sunday Lifestyle and cbv7 Media Master.



"NEWLYWEDS meet Newlyweds" by Luis Naguit of Makati City



"PEEK-A-BOO" by Rosemarie Razon of Malate, Manila



"THAT'S It" by Benjamin Villabona of Parañaque City



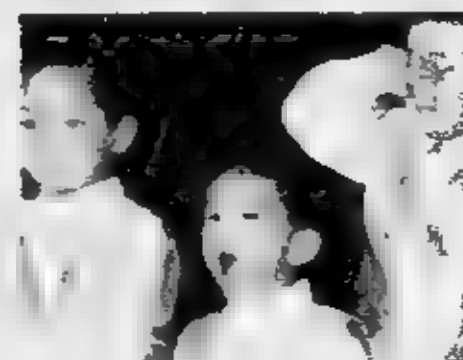
"TAKE It Easy" by Jose Antonio Reyna of Tacloban City



"OOOPS!" by Bernard Mejias of Quezon City



"KILI-KILI Power" by Edith Esquerro of Makati City



"AHI Oh!" by Arnel Garcia of Antipolo City



"CRYING Ladies" by Edward Simon of Sta. Ana, Manila



THE ALMOST complete family photo... with only youngest daughter Bettina missing



FAMILY and guests of Lilio and Becky

Rarity of a marriage

By Kara L. Formoso
Contributor

MARRIAGE these days isn't what it used to be. A person may get married today and be single again in just a few years, months or even days.

Very few can match the longevity of the union of my *abuelito* and *abuelita*—Lilio and Becky (née Mañosa) Formoso.

Today, Dec. 26, my Ito and Ita are celebrating 51 years of wonderful, love-filled marriage. Last year, of course, when they marked the 50th year since they made their vows, the celebration was really special.

A lot of time and effort was put into the preparation for the celebration. My Tita Mitos F. Camahort was feeling harassed overseeing all the arrangements for the important evening. Tita Jinggay Formoso came all the way from the United States for the celebration.

My Ito and Ita, and the rest of the family had not seen her in about six years, so you could imagine the excitement and happiness when she arrived. I thought my Ita was going to have a heart attack!

Unfortunately, my Tita Bettina Formoso, who is also based in the US, could not make it. Still, the evening turned out to be a beautiful and meaningful moment for my Ito and Ita.

The celebration began with a renewal of their wedding vows administered by the distinguished Fr. James B. Reuter, SJ, a dear family friend. The sight of my grandparents saying their "I do's" all over again was a sweet and funny sight. My utterly corny Ito was telling stupid jokes just to annoy my Ita.

The guests, composed only of family and close friends, were charmed by the intimate and humorous ceremony. When it was over, everyone made a beeline to the buffet table laden with different Spanish and Filipino dishes. Dinner lasted for about almost two hours as "long-lost" family members and friends caught up with one another. It was heartwarming to see everyone laughing and chatting nonstop.

The most important part of the evening was the program that we prepared. My Ita was a Hawaiian teacher in her younger days and her favorite song was the "Hawaiian Wedding Song". So the immediate family, composed of my parents, Ed and Bon Formoso; Tita Jinggay; Tita Mitos and my funny

Today, Lilio and Becky Formoso are celebrating 51 years of love and togetherness



uncle, Tito Poch Camahort; my sister Rebecca; and my youngest cousin, Monica Camahort, performed different Hawaiian dances in appropriate costumes.

But the big hit was the number of my crazy dad and uncle who performed their own ridiculous version of a Hawaiian dance in grass skirts. The number got a standing ovation.

Attention then focused on the big screen showing photographs of my grandparents when they were young.

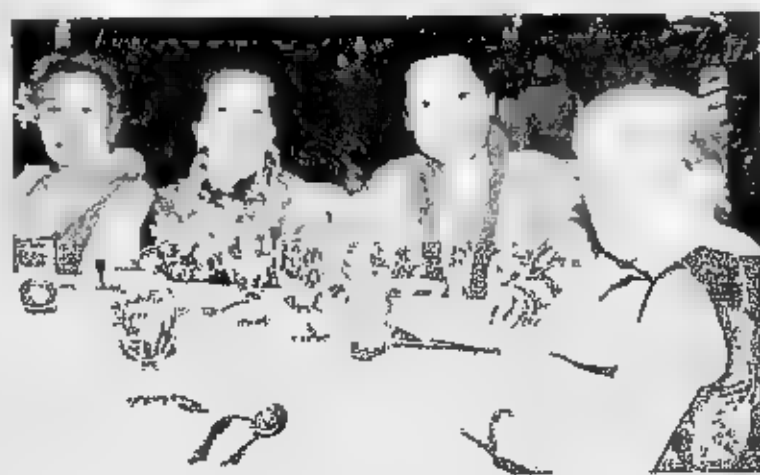
I had the privilege of narrating the story of their lives as pictures flashed on the screen. Funny comments were made as most guests saw younger versions of themselves on screen. The presentation ended with videos from absent relatives greeting my grandparents "Happy anniversary!"

The program ended with my father, their only son, giving a toast. I have never seen my father cry in my entire life. But this time, I saw tears well in his eyes. He choked on his words as he told his parents how we all loved them and that they were the greatest parents anyone could ever ask for. By this time everyone had tears in their eyes.

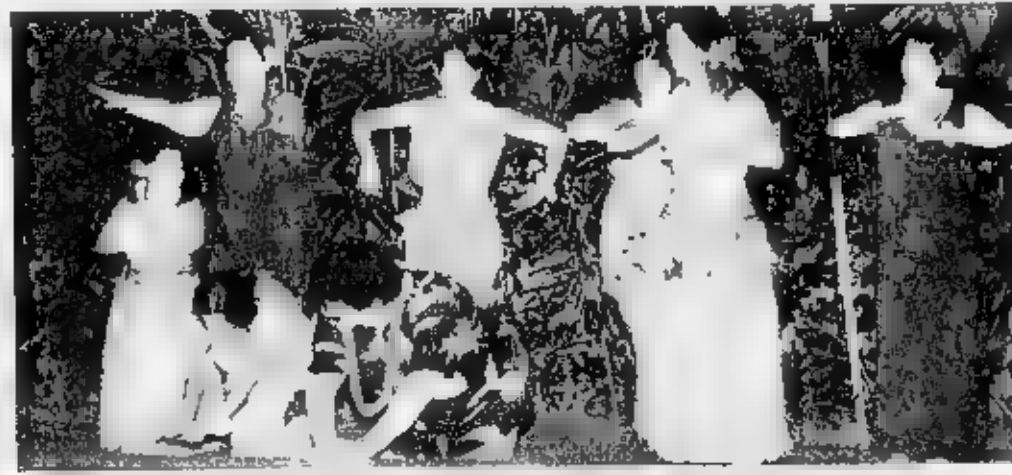
My Ito and Ita were very touched, you could see it in their teary eyes.

When the program ended, it was time for family pictures to be taken. The party broke up in the wee hours of the morning.

Today, the day after Christmas, my Ito and Ita will celebrate another year of togetherness with their children and grandchildren.



MORE family members and guests



THE FINALE... the children, their spouses and the grandchildren, deserving a standing ovation from the guests

PEREZ-UJIKE

Jose Juancho A. Perez, son of Leonardo Sr. (deceased) and Paz A. Perez of Butuan City, will exchange marriage vows with Yoko Ujiike, daughter of Dr. Osamu and Akiko Ujiike of Toyama City, Japan, on Jan. 4, 2005, at the Manila Cathedral. Reception will follow at Ilustrado, Intramuros. The bride will wear a pure white sleeveless and Sabrina neckline gown made of duchess satin, with an A-line skirt extended at

the back accentuated with beadwork. The gowns of the bride and her entourage are creations by Bong Enriquez of Butuan City. The Eucharistic celebration will be officiated by Rev. Fr. Richard L. Salas, the groom's high school classmate.



Milestones

We're accepting announcements of weddings and engagements. Please send the following typewritten information: names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, gown designer and other related information. Readers can send sketches of gowns and pictures of the couple to the Inquirer office, or R.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City, or e-mail lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. This will be printed depending on space availability and at no cost to the sender.



SERRANO-DEL ROSARIO

Zaldy and Ochie were married on Dec. 18 at the Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park.



RAMIREZ-ROMERO

Miles Thaddeus Ramirez, youngest son of Manuel and Dr. Lydia Ramirez, will marry Clarissa Grace Romero, eldest daughter of Roberto and Rosa Isabel Romero, on Dec. 30 at Saint Joseph Parish, Zamboanga City. Reception will follow at Astoria Regency Zamboanga City.

The bride will wear a duchess silk princess-cut gown with three-meter detachable train, accentuated with floral cascading multi-colored embroidery, beadwork with silver threading accent. Scattered Swarovski crystals will make the gown designed by Merlene J. Marcelo sparkle.



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zed 288

This could be under your tree.



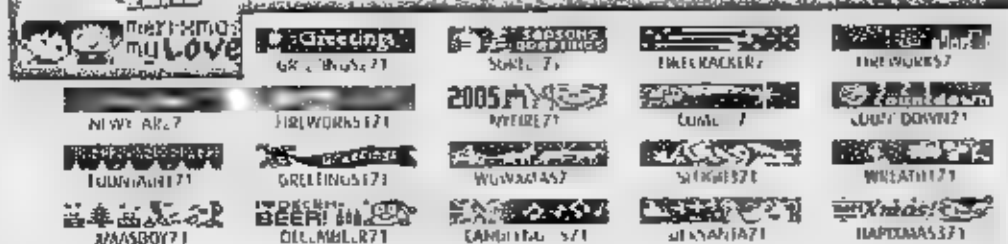
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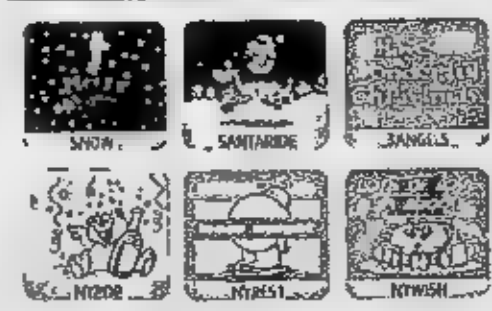
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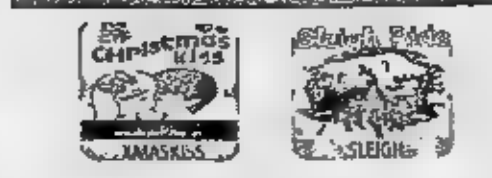
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Sunday LIFE STYLE

The Bohemian look is back

MUST-go-to resto—Pepato's truffle festival. Everyone's favorite chef (mine definitely!) Margarita Fores just got back from her annual trip to Italy and has loads of gastronomic surprises just in time for the Christmas season. She brought back a bounty of Piedmontese white truffles from Alba and will be serving them with simple dishes (shaved on buttered pasta, risotto, grilled kobe beef or veal scallopine) to highlight their flavor.

She has fresh pasta made from organic eggs, too, or just egg yolks. She also brought back *bortarga di muggins*, *prosciutto san danielle* and special cheeses. She brought along three members of her team and learned the art of pizza making in Italy. Her other popular restaurant Cibo (on its eighth branch) will be serving these Italian staples soon.

Make your reservations now (tel. 7572636) as I am sure anything that Margarita comes up with will be in demand! Buon Appetito!

Bohemian is back! Although it may strike the wrong note in some people, the updated Bohemian/hippie look is more luxe than boho. So greet the new year with color and free spirit in these happy and billowy dresses. Italian houses—Blumarine, Etro, Pendi and Emilio Pucci (now under the LV group) set the tribute to the '70s look. Don't just rummage through your mom's closet; this one is updated, fresh and now!

Birthday pampering. I just

T'NT TRENDS & TRENDS

Anton
San Diego



turned 38 years old and I must say I have never felt so old in my life. In my youth, when people said they were 38 I would think, "My, that's ancient!" Today I find my karma: I have become a museum piece as well.

So how did I spend my birthday this year? Last year I had a fun party, but this year I was in need of some serious pampering so I headed off to Bangkok. I stayed at the newly renovated Shangri-La Hotel and got myself some much needed R&R. After a total of nine hours of massage (from different spas including Shangri-La's Chi and Oriental Spa, Banyan Tree—more next week), body scrub, healing stones, yoga, etc., I feel like a totally rejuvenated piece of kobe beef.

I had ample time to reflect on a lot of things and I came to the realization that where I am now is exactly where I should be. I would never trade the things I learned this year, the blessings, the people I have met, the struggles and victories for anything, not even a year's supply of La Mer!

A friend of mine sent me this birthday quote by actress Susan Sarandon, which encapsulates my sentiments. "I look forward to being older, when what I look like becomes less and less an issue and what I am is the point."

I guess the most important aspect of growing older is being wise, going beyond mere aesthetics and learning to be better and more self-evolved person. It's been so good so far.

Must-watch movie—"Meet the Fockers." With all the movies that's coming out during the Christmas holidays, there's one movie that I can't wait to see. From the title alone you know it's going to be a hilariously wild ride. "Meet the Fockers" is the sequel to the very successful "Meet the Parents." Watch out for it in Manila cinemas in January 2005.

15 New Year's Resolutions: I am going to get ahead of the pack and give you my new year's resolutions. You can share some of mine if you are still thinking of your own. Here goes.

- Stay away from my obsession with reality TV shows. Why would I be interested in a "Survivor" getting booted out. I'm not winning the million dollars!

- Vow not to buy pirated DVDs. I'll just have them delivered to my house.

- Pay my bills on time. To avoid the risk of getting my credit card and utilities cut off

- Do things I enjoy and spend time with positive people. So you'll see me more in Red Box and will pray Oprah needs an assistant?

- Get my ultimate fitness wish: A six-pack. Will settle for two or four by December 2005

- Stop gossiping, complaining and arguing. (Yeah, right!)

- Save money.
- Not to rush when having a meal. I must instead chew and enjoy my food.

- Learn a new sport or hobby. Billiards and crocheting are on

the top of my list.

- Learn not to be annoyed when people spit on the street, pick their teeth, make funny noises when they eat or pick their nose in public. Rather help them get over their annoying habits and videotape them.

- Stop laughing at fat cops, politicians and Pinoy who mistake their P's for F's and vice versa.

- Try to upstage Tessa Valdes and Tim Yap when it comes to dressing. (Tall order!)

- Get over my fear and use these ugly punk urinals on Eisa

(Just for the heck of it. Note to self: Bring Lysol.)

- Banish black-and-white from my wardrobe, or maybe use it every other day.

- Lastly, never to cease praying for our country and its people. 2004 was a sad and disastrous year—calamities, terrorism, plagues and natural disasters. But through perseverance in prayers and having faith and hope, the tide will change.

E-mail the author at antonstd@philtatler.com.



PEPATO's truffle festival

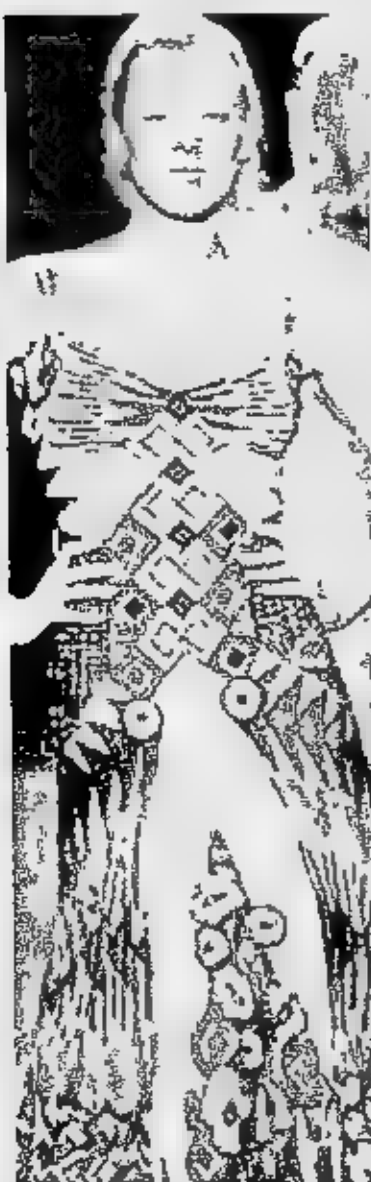
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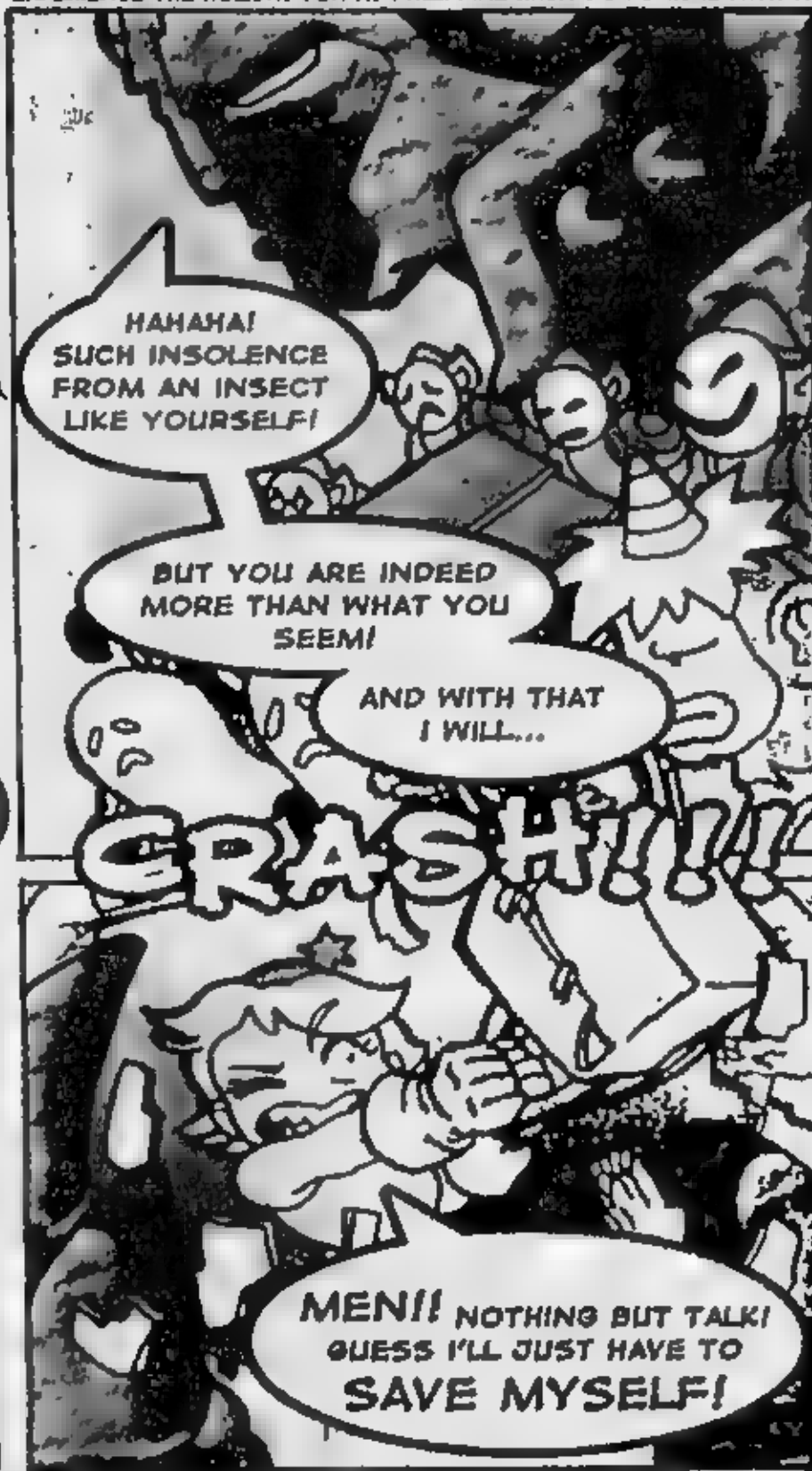


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BY ROBERT WONG

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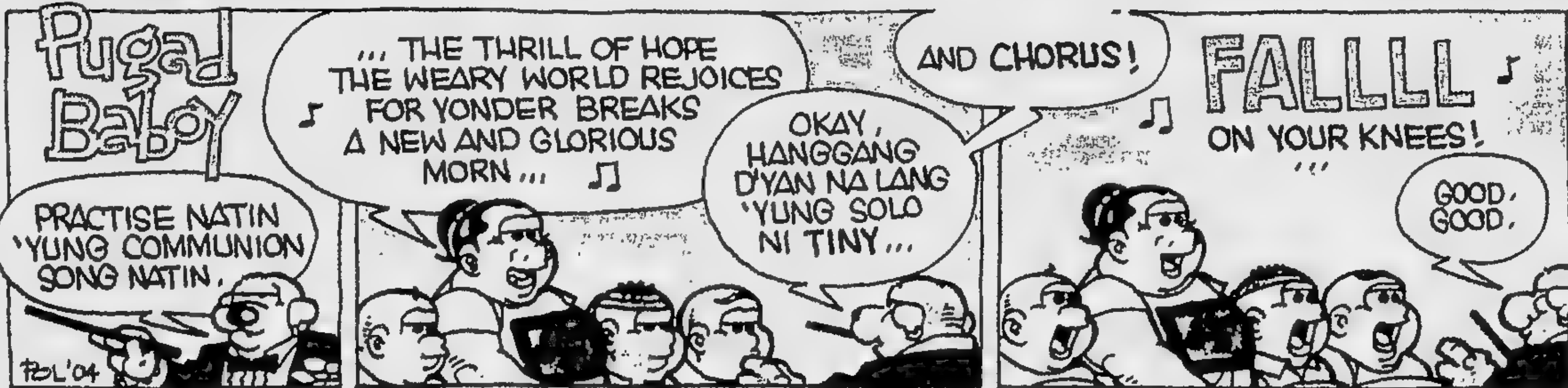


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To claim your prizes, please call (02) 897-8808 loc. 352. Look for Mr. Dennis Leung

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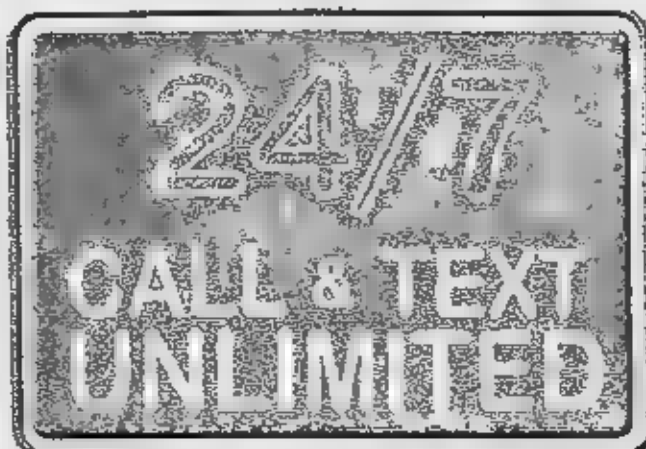
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Sunday LIFE STYLE

Life and style in 2004

AS far as lifestyle goes, 2004 is best summed up as the hottest object of desire, and brooches—made of either real or faux stones—became mainstays in a woman's wardrobe alongside pearl necklaces, tweed jackets, tiered skirts, Kelly bags, round-toe pumps and knitted shawls.

In a way, it was also a year of contradictions, as the young and not-so-young

Everyone went on the South Beach Diet, but women ended up hiding their brand-new, hard-won bodies in tweedy blazers and granny chic

shunned carbs—but not Go Nut Donuts—and gobbled more than their fair share of protein as they went either on Atkins or South Beach (yes, dieting has now become a proper noun) only to hide their brand-new, hard-fought bodies behind layers of tweedy outfits fashionistas called Granny chic. Suddenly, looking old beyond one's years was so in.

Incidentally, the South Beach Diet spawned a book with the same name by Dr. Arthur Agatston, and suddenly weight watchers were more concerned with their "glycemic index" rates than their blood pressures and, well, weight.

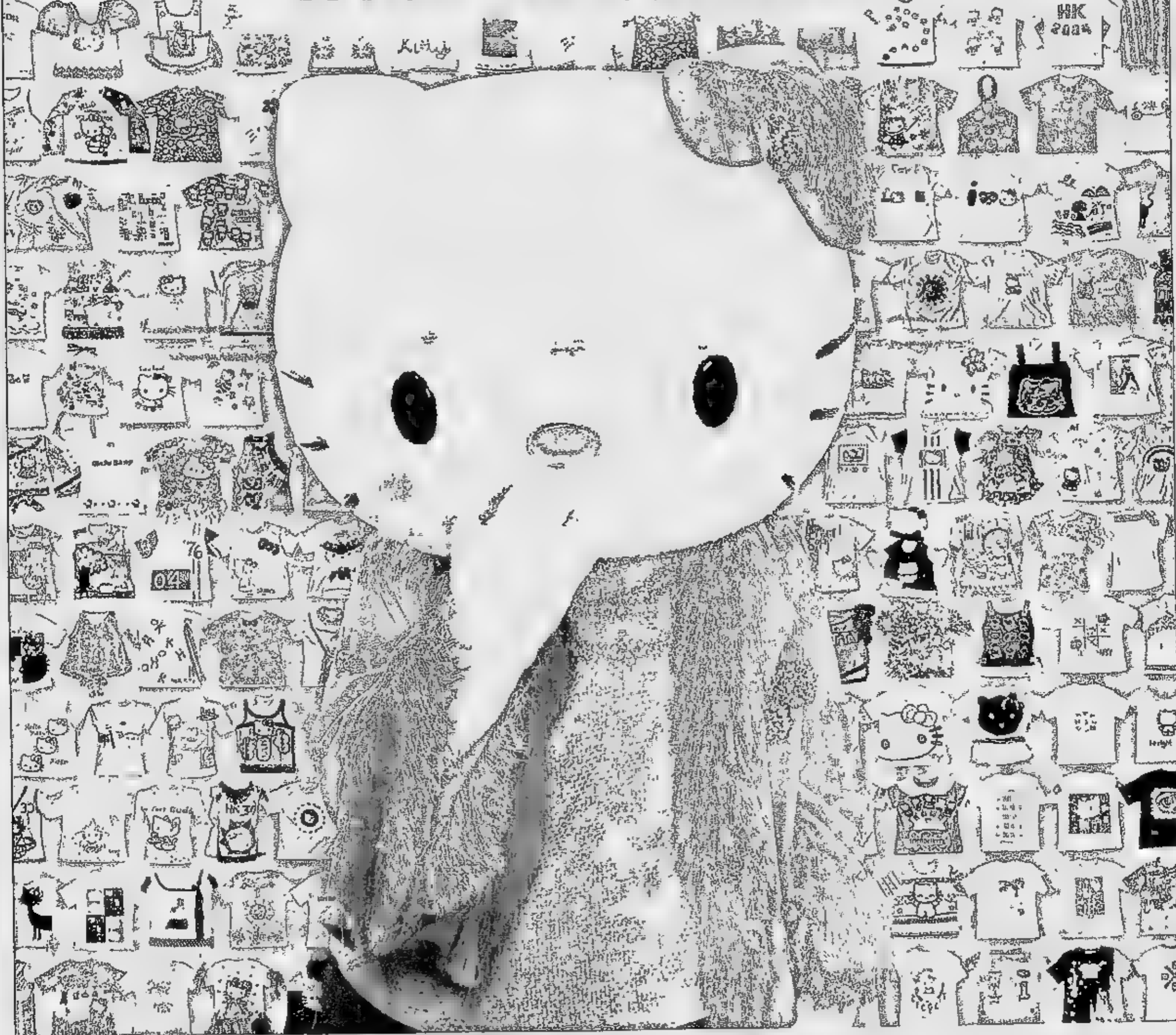
As the "South Beach Diet" soared to the top

of the non-fiction list, Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code" continued to lord it over other works of fiction, causing a worldwide phenomenon and leaving countless Christians (okay, Catholics) questioning their faith and looking a tad longer at "The Last Supper."

The words "sacred feminine" have yet to make it to Webster's, but to countless Brown "converts," Mary Magdalene's role in the early Church would never be the same again. With reports from Alex Vergara, Tino Teyera, Vangie Baga-Reyes, Anne Jambora, Cheche Moral, Pam Pastor, Rowena Burgos and Gibbs Cadiz

LIFE/G2

Thank You For Making The Design-A-Tee Contest A Purr-fect Success!



SMART and Gift Gate salute all the celebrities and budding designers who joined the Design-a-Tee contest and made it a purr-fect success!
We thank you for sharing with us your artistic talents and for allowing us to showcase your works of art as part of our celebration of Hello Kitty 30th birthday

You can still view the over one thousand unique and extraordinary Hello Kitty designed tees from our contestants and celebrities because the Hello One-of-a-Kind Museum at G/F, Glorietta 2 has been extended until January 15, 2005, 12nn-6pm.

An Awards Night honoring the winners of the Design-a-Tee contest will take place soon so watch out for more details!

Celebrity designed shirts are up for auction on eBay until December 28, so visit eBay now and make a bid!
Proceeds will go to charity.

Auction for non-celebrity designed winning shirts on eBay will be from December 27 to January 5, 2005.

* Claiming of shirts at the Gift Gate Head Office will be from January 17-21, 2005, 1-5pm.

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Ford, de Sole bow out

In April, Gucci and YSL creative director Tom Ford with his partner in success, Gucci Group CEO Domenico de Sole, resigned from their respective positions after an impasse with the bosses of partner company and French retail giant Pinault Printemps Redoute over creative control of the design house.

The move was seen as the end of an era, as Ford is acknowledged as one of the most influential designers of the previous decade. Ford and De Sole are credited for the successful resuscitation of the almost-bankrupt fashion house.

When the Gucci Group bought into Yves Saint Laurent, Ford took on the position of creative director, designing both labels at the same time. He kept his promise to make the two labels both sexy but distinct, making Gucci and YSL two of the most-coveted fashion labels.

Stefano Piatì, former YSL right hand man of the Texas-born designer, succeeded Ford at YSL. Former Gucci womenswear director Alessandra Facchinetti took over Ford at Gucci. Robert Polet, who used to head Unilever's frozen food and ice cream division, succeeded De Sole.

Death of icons

Photography icons Helmut Newton and Richard Avedon both passed away this year. Newton in January at age 83 and more recently Avedon at 81.

The German-born Newton, who died in a car crash, was known for his provocative black-and-white nude photographs. His works have appeared in Vogue, Elle and Playboy, earning him the reputation of making porn chic.

Avedon, meanwhile, was widely acknowledged for redefining fashion photography. His work helped create the supermodel era of Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford. He was also known for his unconventional portraits of powerful and powerless personages.

The first staff photographer of The New Yorker, Avedon was on assignment for the magazine when he succumbed to a brain hemorrhage.

In September, the fashion world also lost innovative designer Geoffrey Beene, who died at age 77. The football jersey he fashioned into an evening gown in the 1960s became the precursor of today's glam sportswear designs. It remains one of his most lasting design legacies.

He simplified womenswear by divesting his designs of zippers and paddings, resulting in a kind of draping technique for a thoroughly streamlined feminine look.

Granny chic and '50s glam

THE year 2004 saw the resurgence of the Glamour 1950s with prom-chic looks, full and flirty skirts, fitted cardigans, vintage brooches, round-toe and peep-toe pumps, ballerina flats, ribbon bows, Audrey Hepburn-style cropped and cuffed pants and clamdiggers.

Suddenly it was chic to dress up like Grandma, as the year also saw the revival of tweed, the material making incarnations in pencil skirts and jackets, shoes and bags. 2004 was the year when skin was out, and sexy meant layered and covered up.

More Hollywood endorsers

FOLLOWING the success of the Fall 2003 campaign of French luxury brand Louis Vuitton which hired pop star Jennifer Lopez as its model, 2004 saw more show-biz personalities becoming image models of fashion and cosmetic labels.

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HOUSE of Laurel



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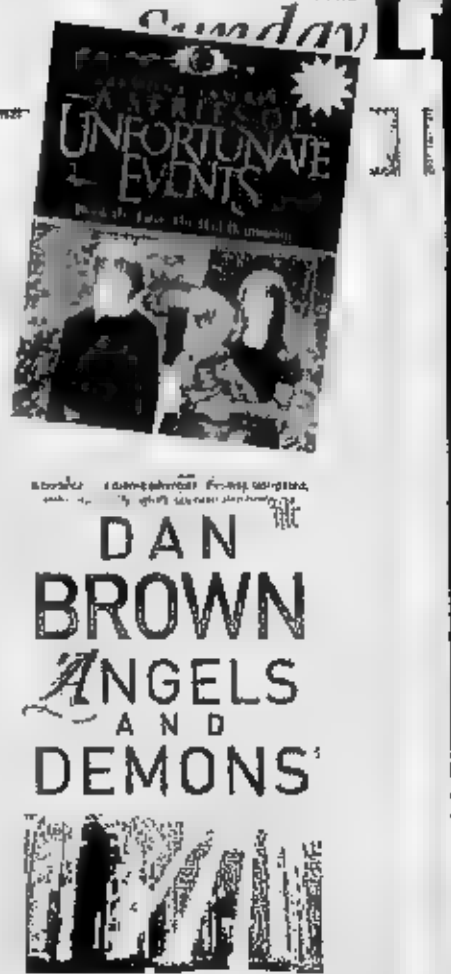
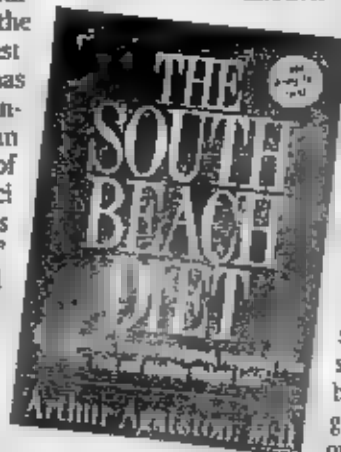
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Life and s



On a wing and a budget

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Hotel wireless

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Wi-Fi gives travelers mobility and flexibility. Instead of being snuck in the hotel room connected to a cable modem, they can access the Internet from Wi-Fi hotspots. A lot of hotels also have Wi-Fi in meeting rooms, a definite plus for businessmen.

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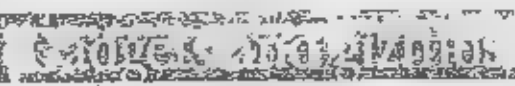
Considered the heart and soul of Vietnam, this bustling and dynamic city offers many attractions to would-be visitors. It combines the allure of a metropolis with the charms of its timeless traditions and ancient

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Featuring the envy of the MP3 industry, the Apple Click Wheel, the iPod Photo has a music library storage of up to 15,000 songs, and space for up to 25,000 photos in vibrant colors, enough to cover a 5,000 sq ft wall space!

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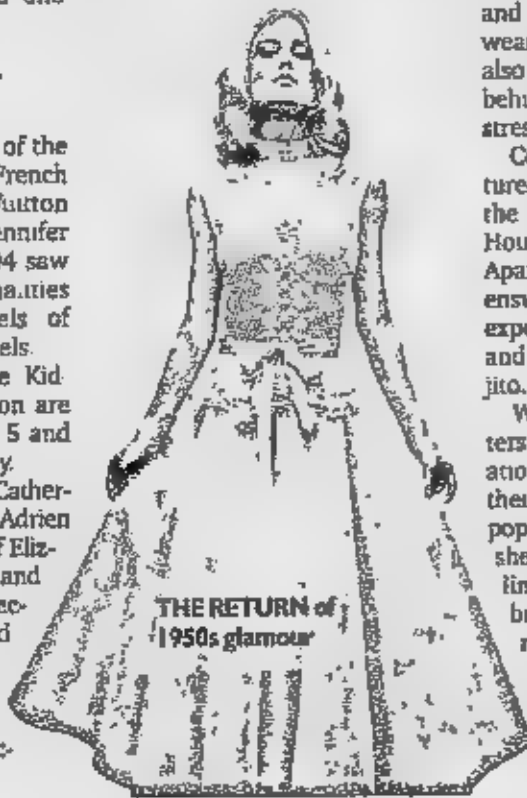
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THE RETURN of 1950s glamour

Fashion

Ford, de Sole bow out

In April, Gucci and YSL creative director Tom Ford with his partner in success, Gucci Group CEO Domenico de Sole, resigned from their respective positions after an impasse with the bosses of partner company and French retail giant Pinault Printemps Redoute over creative control of the design house.

The move was seen as the end of an era, as Ford is acknowledged as one of the most influential designers of the previous decade. Ford and De Sole are credited for the successful resuscitation of the almost-bankrupt fashion house.

When the Gucci Group bought into Yves Saint Laurent, Ford took on the position of creative director, designing both labels at the same time. He kept his promise to make the two labels both sexy but distinct, making Gucci and YSL two of the most-coveted fashion labels.

Stefano Pilati, former YSL right-hand man of the Texas-born designer, succeeded Ford at YSL. Former Gucci womenswear director Alessandra Facchinetti took over Ford at Gucci. Robert Polet, who used to head Unilever's frozen food and ice cream division, succeeded De Sole.

Death of icons

Photography icons Helmut Newton and Richard Avedon both passed away this year. Newton in January at age 83 and more recently Avedon at 81.

The German-born Newton, who died in a car crash, was known for his provocative black-and-white nude photographs. His works have appeared in *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Playboy*, earning him the reputation of making porn chic.

Avedon, meanwhile, was widely acknowledged for redefining fashion photography. His work helped create the supermodel era of Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford. He was also known for his unconventional portraits of powerful and powerless personages.

The first staff photographer of *The New Yorker*, Avedon was on assignment for the magazine when he succumbed to a brain hemorrhage.

In September, the fashion world also lost innovative designer Geoffrey Beene, who died at age 77. The football jersey he fashioned into an evening gown in the 1960s became the precursor of today's glam sportswear designs. It remains one of his most lasting design legacies.

He simplified womenswear by divesting his designs of zippers and paddings, resulting in a kind of draping technique for a thoroughly streamlined feminine look.

Granny chic and '50s glam

THE year 2004 saw the resurgence of the Glamour 1950s with prom-chic looks, full and flirty skirts, fitted cardigans, vintage brooches, round-toe and peep-toe pumps, ballerina flats, ribbon bows, Audrey Hepburn-style cropped and cuffed pants and dandiggers.

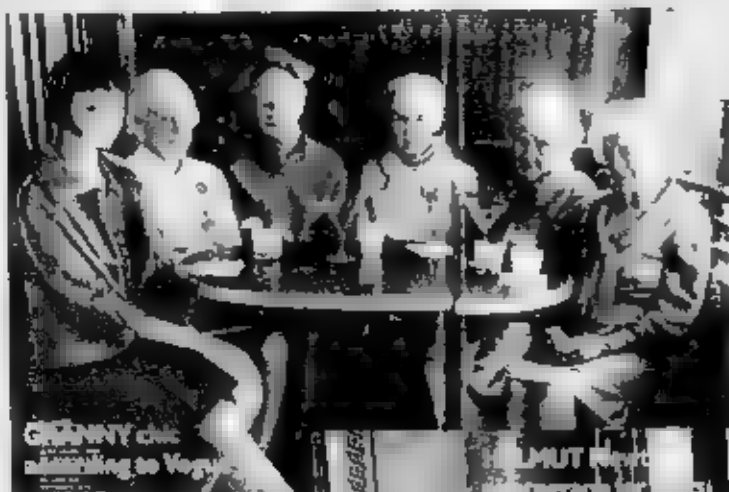
Suddenly it was chic to dress up like Grandma, as the year also saw the revival of tweed, the maternal making incarnations in pencil skirts and jackets, shoes and bags. 2004 was the year when skin was out, and sexy meant layered and covered up.

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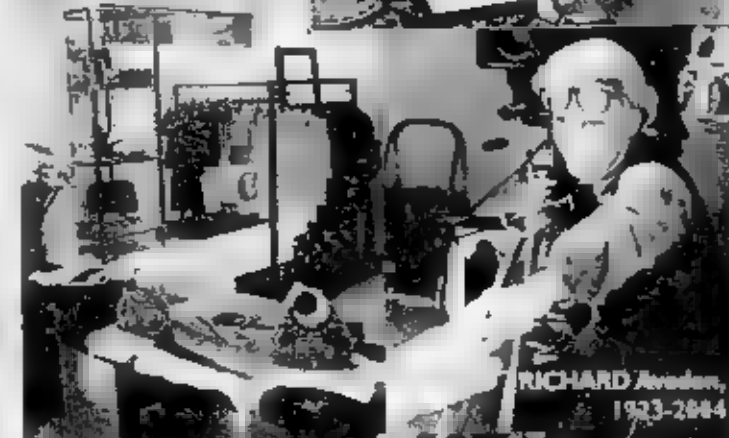
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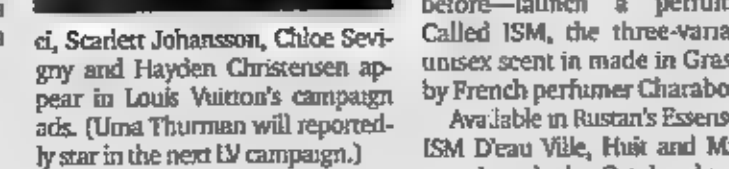
RICHARD Avedon, 1923-2004



JAMIE Lynn of "The Sopranos" in a Monique Lhuillier



TOM Ford at his final show for YSL Rive Gauche



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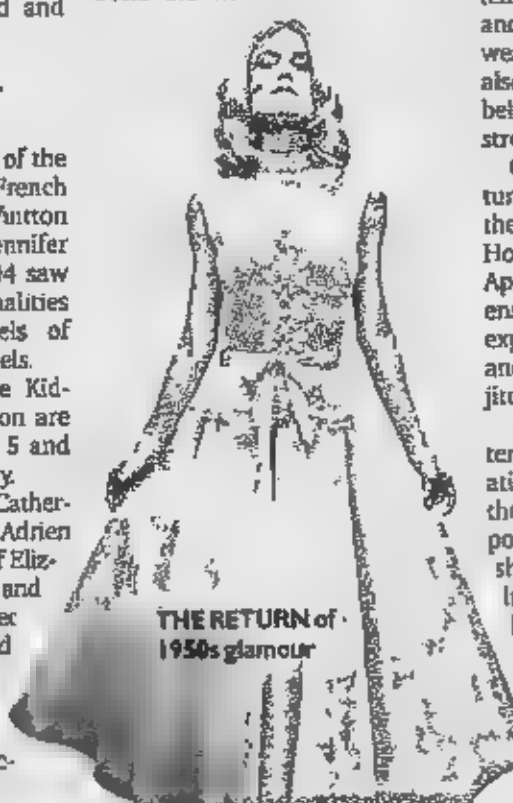
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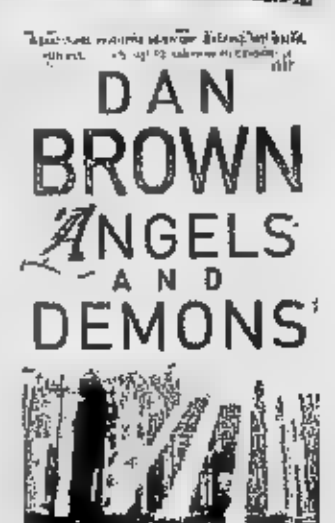
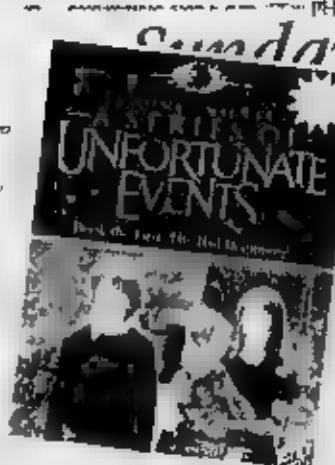
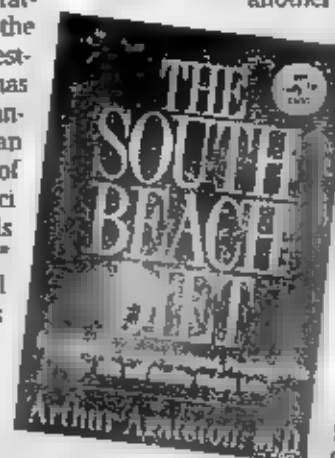
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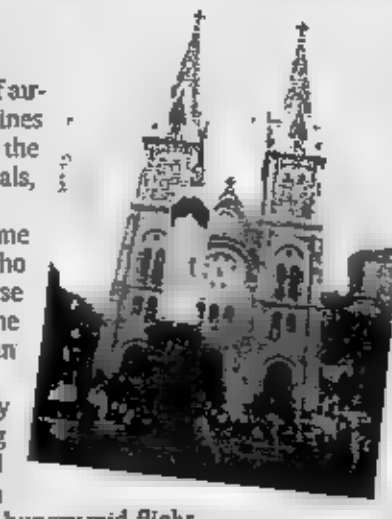
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THE ULTIMATE MUSIC JOURNAL

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THE EXTREME Sony Vaio X505

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The visual arts

Magsaysay-Ho turns 90

The Grand Lady of Philippine Art celebrated her 90th birthday in March with a show of three major paintings, several watercolor pieces and numerous drawing studies at the Crucible Gallery.

She did this at an age when other artists either have long retired or are churning out minor works.

The show reaffirmed why Magsaysay-Ho was the only female artist allowed into the circle of the Thirteen Moderns, and why she should have been our first woman National Artist in Painting.

State of visual arts

Mobilized by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, artists from all regions of the archipelago converged to present multimedia installations in the CCP Main Gallery and hallways during "Sungdu-an" in March. What emerged was a synthesis of the state of the visual arts in the country today.

Mall culture

Over at the Podium in August, Filinvest Art File presented "Display," a gathering of six young artists from Singapore and the Philippines that portrayed mall culture and decon-



ANITA Magsaysay-Ho's "Peanut Vendors"

structed the mall experience.

Curated by Gerry Tan, the project exemplified the successful collaboration and interaction of artists not just from the regions but from different countries.

"Group Show," a year-end ongoing at the SM Megamall and Glorietta and curated by Roberto Chabet, offers 360 artworks from 60 artists. The widest variety of artistic styles and mediums ever assembled in one exhibition, this one is a virtual showcase of three generations of Philippine art.

Major league

The Philippine Drawing Society Competition, an ongoing exhibit in the Art Center at the SM Mega-

mall's Artwalk, is attracting over 140 entries in any drawing medium, along with the drawings of some 20 established artists. This is the biggest effort so far to push drawing into the league of the major art forms.

Top-selling masterpieces

Filipino masters made news in the Sotheby's auction of Southeast Asian paintings in Singapore in October. Juan Luna's "Steel Mills" became the second most expensive lot in the auction when it sold for \$5518,000.

Fabian de la Rosa's "Woman," estimated at \$59,500, became one of the biggest surprises when it sold for over \$530,000. Meanwhile, Anita Magsaysay-Ho's "Gleaners" soared from \$5120,000 to \$5250,000. (Do we hear some murmuring from the GSIS?)

Salvo of glorious art

The new Ayala Museum opened

to the public at Greenbelt 4 in October—a handsome four-story structure of granite, glass, wood, concrete and steel. For the inaugural, it sent a salvo of four grand exhibitions.

Starting last month through June next year, it is showcasing 70 years of Philippine modern art with 32 selected works by 27 artists loaned by the Singapore National Heritage Board, which has one of the biggest collections of Philippine art abroad.

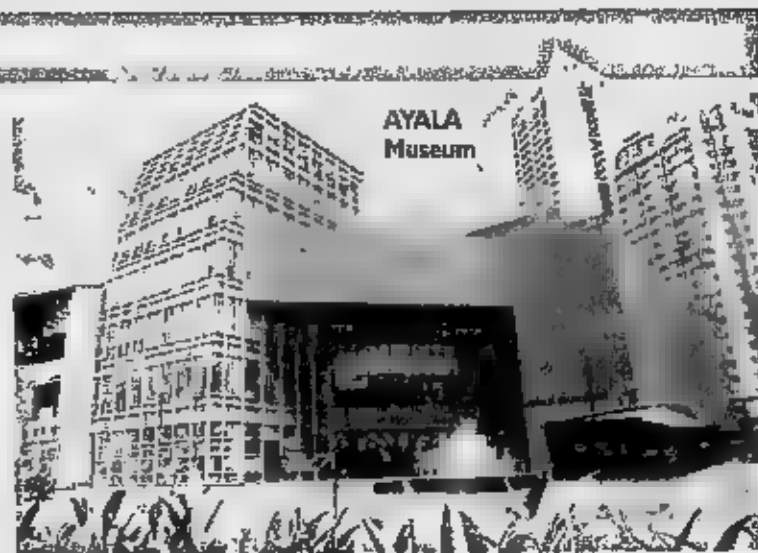
Return of the native

After living in over 100 countries, artist Pacita Abad died of lung cancer in Singapore early this month and was returned to her Batanes homeland. Abad, part of the diaspora of Filipino artists some decades ago, was noted for her color-



PACITA Abad

ful trapunto art, which collaged embroidery and painting. She visited Manila in September for "Circles in My Mind," her final exhibit in the country of her birth.



AYALA Museum

Atkins loses out to SBD

The South Beach Diet overtook the Atkins method as the newest weight-loss rage in 2004.

The book, "The South Beach Diet" by Dr. Arthur Agatston, has been a bestseller for months and has moved ahead of "Atkins for Life" to top The New York Times bestseller list.

While people count calories on the Weight Watchers regime, the South Beach Diet picks out foods with low glycemic-index numbers and allows dieters to eat generous portions.

The glycemic index rates foods that contain carbohydrates on how quickly they're digested and how they affect the level of sugar in the blood.

The South Beach Diet has three phases and recommends high-fiber foods, fresh vegetables and lean meat, but it also allows for an occasional indulgence. Easy-to-follow instructions keep dieters from having to count the numbers the way they do on "calorie-counting" regimes.

A later-released cookbook complemented the original diet book.

Good year for badminton

More badminton courts opened in the fringes of urban centers, making it possible for the middle class to play a round or two. It didn't hurt that badminton is an indoor sport and is thus accessible throughout the year. More companies joined tournaments, as did more individual players, creating a demand for a specialty publication like the INQUIRER Badminton Monthly. And sportswear manufacturers have been only too quick to come out with a badminton fashion line. Combined with the South Beach diet, badminton is a winner.

Way to de-stress

Belly dancing is considered a folk dance in Turkey. But for women of all ages, it's a unique way to get in shape. Those who take hour-long classes don't just move parts of their body, but the entire caboodle.

The neck and shoulders move, the chest and diaphragm lift. The pelvis goes up and down. The dance is soft on the joints, and yet it's very energetic and very aerobic.

A single belly dance session works hundreds of muscles, burns calories and helps one to de-stress.



Mind-body workout

Yoga and Pilates continued to be popular in 2004, but the trend was to blend mind-body workouts with those that were more traditional, such as yoga using a stability ball.

Buff arms and a yoga-booty aren't the only reasons people are flocking to yoga. This "mind-body" system of postures, like downward-facing dog and cobra, can ease stress.

Pilates, on the other hand, is synonymous with "core" training, because the various exercises use and strengthen the muscles in the abdomen, back, upper legs and buttocks. Method exercises also encourage increased flexibility, joint mobility and range-of-motion.

Take-home or work out

As home exercise videos and DVDs became more attractive to fitness buffs, more gyms also opened in malls, as if to drive home the message that shopping isn't enough exercise.

A well-rounded collection of workouts covering all areas of fitness that include strength, cardiovascular training and flexibility is available on videos and DVDs. But for some people, nothing beats having a personal trainer, and the social benefits of going to gym on a regular basis.

INQUIRER Badminton Monthly

Style in 2004

Martha's graveyard?

The gracious facade Martha Stewart carefully crafted through the years finally crumbled this year as America's pre-eminent doyenne of home and entertaining was found guilty of conspiracy, obstruction and counts of lying to investors in connection with the 2001 sale of her stocks in the tech company Imclone.

Before her misdeeds started unraveling, the home-style diva was at the helm of a multimillion-business empire responsible for producing her popular TV show "Martha Stewart Living." It spawned a monthly glossy magazine with the same title.

According to a CNN report, Stewart began reporting to a minimum-security prison in Alderson, West Virginia, to start serving a five-month sentence. She was also fined \$30,000, on top of five months of home confinement and two years of supervised probation after her release.

Match and match

Although trends in interior design closely follow that of fashion, furniture pieces, unlike clothes, aren't as easily subjected to the changing whims of style arbiters. After all, says Kish, changing the sofa is a lot more expensive and



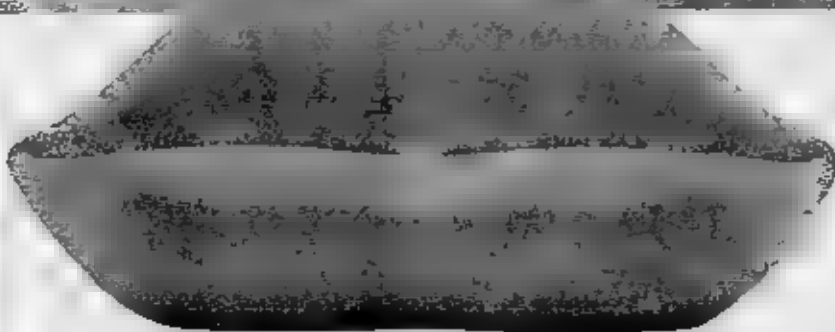
complicated than buying the latest tops and bottoms.

Thus, "mix matching" or "personalizing," wherein new key pieces are mixed with old yet classic ones, became quite a trend this year.

Apart from the savings it generated, it allowed people to veer from the uncluttered hotel look commonly featured in most interior design magazines (and adopted by not a few interior designers). Homogeneity gave way to a more nuanced look as more homeowners gained confidence to express themselves.

Hot chocolate

While the color green made a splash on runways, chocolate brown became the shade of choice in most homes this year. Since wells can look a tad gloomy if painted entirely in dark brown, furniture and interior designers



such as Ito Kish used it as an accent color to paint doors and certain sections of the house.

Lighter shades such as cream, ivory and moss green allowed limited areas covered in luscious chocolate to stand out.

Curtains to drapes

The look of luxury may have been pretty big, but most homeowners were still in a penny-pinching mood. This was reflected in people's limited use of heavy drapery. Drapes were confined mainly on valances and both sides of the window, as relatively cheaper, low-maintenance blinds literally took center stage.

Leather-bound

Never mind if Filipinos have yet to experience winter in the Philippines, the warm feel of real leather was pretty big on the home front this year.

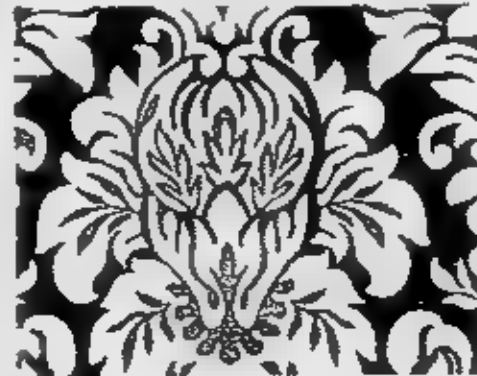
It came primarily in neutral colors such as black, brown, beige and white, says Kish, but wasn't limited to chairs and sofas and the

usual accent or throw pillows.

Leather found its way on tables as centerpieces or on the floor via area rugs made to look like crocodile hide or a patchwork of small pieces in varying hues.

Lap of luxury

Rich fabrics in the form of curtains and upholstery also made a comeback this year. As a result of mix matching, faux fur was among the materials of choice for such accent pieces as footstools. Toile de joie prints, Kish adds, are bound to get bigger next year.



CANON 300D

more photos and videos, extra large 2.3" TFT screen with a Horizontal User Interface, a five-way Navigation Pad, PlayNow for music downloads, and more. The SE S700i is designed to look like a sleek digital camera that you just might want to use as a cell phone.

Extreme notebook

This notebook, nicknamed the Extreme, tips the scale at 1.5 pounds. The lightest in the world, says Sony, the X505 comes with a THE screen, Pentium M SLIM processor, 20 GB hard



drive and 512 MB RAM. Remarkably slim at less than an inch thick, it's crafted with a carbon hybrid material.

Affordable pro digi cam

Digital SLR cameras are finally within everyone's reach. With the Canon 300D and Nikon D70 DSLRs aimed for the \$1,000 market, anyone can now become a pro—or at least pretend to be one anyway—by simply clicking its user-friendly features. Both are excellent cameras for newbies and pros alike. After all, it's the eye of the photographer that matters, and not the camera.

Specialty diets

The South Beach Diet tops the list of so-called specialty diets that hit this year's food scene.

Fad or not, more and more people are getting hooked on what SBD promises its followers. SBD is said to be a healthy, easy and effective but natural and tasteful way to lose weight.

With SBD's popularity, it didn't take long for a number of chefs to whip up special SBD recipes to help would-be converts as well as make it easier for believers to stick to the food regimen.

SBD meals can now be delivered to one's home or office from some of the country's leading restaurants. Leading the pack are Cibo's Margarita Fores, Le Souffle's Jessie Sinco, Top of the Ciu's Morabel Co and sisters Rachel and Barni Alejandro. Their menus feature dishes that strictly follow the guidelines set by Agatston.

A close second to SBD is the low-carbohydrate, high-protein food diet. Filipinos today are counting their carbs. As such,

restaurant chains such as TGI Friday's and Chili's have included low-carb selections in their menus.

Even Burger King now has a bun-less Whopper. Subway offers a low-carb wrap, while Carl's Jr. has a lettuce-wrapped burger.

Drink without rules

If you want to talk "rules" of wine and food pairing, the oldest one in the book is red with meat, white with fish or fowl.

But with all the wine-and-food-tasting events in 2004, both chefs and their clientele have learned to buck the rule. They've declared that it's okay to have Pinot Noir, which is a light red wine, or even Merlot with seafood. More chefs now believe it's impossible to ruin a good meal if you select a wine that you enjoy.

Frozen foods

Filipinos' eating habits have changed drastically over the years, as people have gotten busier. Thus, supermarkets now sell frozen precooked "homemade"

foods such as *sisig*, *adobo*, *kinang* and even boneless *bangus* with rice and topped with a variety of sauces. A few minutes on the microwave and you're on your way to a really good snack or meal.

Even 24-hour convenient stores such as Mini-Stop and 7-11 now offer consumers instant choices—from sandwiches to pizza to beef *tapa* and *longganisa*.

Nuts over donuts

The success and popularity of Go Nuts Donuts could be gleaned from the long lines leading to its counters when its first outlet opened at The Fort. Go Nuts is said to be a "new-generation donut"—softer, lighter and melts in your mouth.

Many people agree that it's less sweet than more popular brands, and has done away with the subtle lemony taste distinct in American-made donuts.

Culinary career

Not a few have discovered that one important step to a successful culinary career is to find a highly



respected school that offers world-class education. The opening of the International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management (ISCAHM) tries to answer this quest.

ISCAHM provides the training and expertise one needs to begin a career in the culinary industry. The instructors, led by chef Norbert Gandler and Hans Schallenberg, bring with them years of experience and discriminating palates.

The school combines demonstration, followed by hands-on practical courses in professionally equipped, modern kitchens. On top of its world-class curriculum, students are encouraged to explore their own styles, creativity and cultural backgrounds.

'Unseen' Filipino artworks at Ayala Museum



JIN WAI Theng of Keppel, SM Supermalls VP Annie Garcia, Singaporean Ambassador Lim Kheng Hua and Singapore Tourism Board's Rocson Chang



RYAN LIM

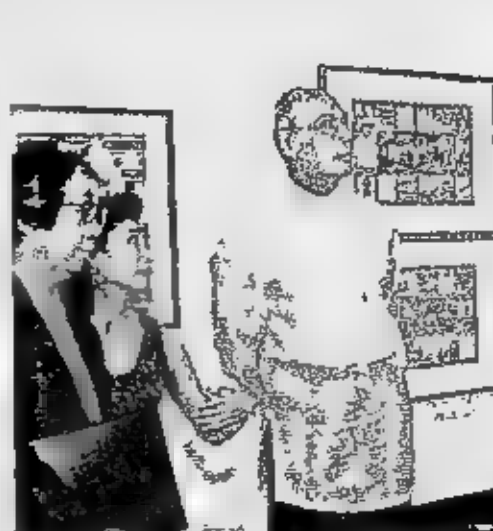
DO DROP by the Ayala Museum for a look at 32 artworks by Filipino artists, many never been exhibited in public in the Philippines.

"Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum" showcases close to a century of Philippine art from Fabian de la Rosa's "Portrait of Jose Rizal" to Nunelucio Alvarado's "Crossing in 2000." You can also see some Amorsolos, Arturo Luz and Botongs.

DIPLOMATIC SWIRL

By Amiga

The exhibit was formally launched in November at the chair's gala for Ayala Museum partners and donors. The event was highlighted by the signing of a memorandum of agreement between Ayala Foundation chair Jaime Zobel de Ayala and Singapore Ambassador-at-large and chair of the National Heritage Board professor Tommy Koh (one of Doris Ho's "favorite" persons and one she



SINGAPORE Ambassador-at-large and chair of the National Heritage Board professor Tommy Koh, Ayala Museum director Dr. Florina Capistrano-Baker, and Ayala Corp. and Ayala Foundation chair Jaime Zobel de Ayala view one of the 32 paintings by Filipino artists that are part of the homecoming exhibit "Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum."



DPHENHYDRAMINE HCl
PHENYLPROPANOLAMINE HCl
NEW ALLERIN

ALLERIN

Magandang Bagong Taon
sa malingit na araw
yap't spon eluot ng allergy.
Mag NEW ALLERIN palagi.

thinks should be cloned. I agree)
"Crossings" is the beginning of a five-year collaboration between the Ayala Foundation and Singapore's National Heritage Board that aims to strengthen cultural ties between the Philippines and Singapore.

French arrivals

French Ambassador Renée Veyret hosted a dinner reception in honor of two newly arrived members of her staff, François Blamont, counselor for cooperation and cultural affairs, and the very pretty and young Claire Crochemore, science attaché.

Manila designers, Metro and Tatler magazines may well have a new model in the brainy Madame Crochemore.

Feminism's centennial

Although she's busy preparing for the Centennial of the Feminist Movement of the Philippines next year (bet you didn't know there was such a move), chair Narda Camacho still found time to celebrate her birthday at the ballroom of the Manila Mandarin. Mouf was environment.

Chito Macapagal of Unilever donated 30 coffee-table books about Laguna Lake and Pasig River that were given to guests who came in dresses and shirts with flora and fauna designs and even taras of leaves. Among the winners were Thai Ambassador Busba Bunnag, Brunei Ambassador Munah Dato Elias, Silvia Schuff, Nena Casimiro, Alice Briones, Tereret Liboro, Ulrike Da Silva, Honorary Consuls Melbie Ablaza, Helen Ong, Fortune Ledesma and Evie Costa, and many other "environmentalists."

Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, Gen. Victor Corpus, sculptor Ramon Orlina and Boyzie Villavicencio (who made Narda's dress for the 24th time) assisted 20 dancing instructors in making sure all the guests danced way past midnight.

Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee donated 40 baskets containing the famous Bicol pill nuts and the hostess gave away her manual on solid waste management.

Before they left, all the guests got a carabao mango seedling, a gift from Chito Bertol of the Manila Seedling Bank.

Narda's children, Teodoro and Techie, Marissa, Chacha and JR, and Vinita Camacho all helped to make it a successful evening.

Performance venue

The Podium is getting to be the "in" place for classy exhibits and concerts that are intimate even though open to the public as well. In November, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), with the Podium, celebrated the inauguration of its Manila office. There was a lot of hot curry from Banana Leaf. A wonderful dragon dance troupe performed followed by Chinese opera actors.

It seems there is enough air traffic between Manila and Singapore to warrant STB's opening an office here. This should make Rita Dee of Singapore Airlines and Rocson Chang of the Singapore Tourism Board beam this Christmas.



FRENCH Ambassador Renée Veyret, cultural counselor François Blamont and science attaché Claire Crochemore at the reception for the new French staff BETTY JOHNSON



MARISSA Camacho, Narda Camacho and Secretary of Finance Juanita Amatong

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

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TRAVEL BRIEFS

Snow fun at Mandarin

MANDARIN Oriental Manila recently launched its Snow Fun at the Captain's Bar, in line with its White Christmas theme this Yuletide season.

Richwell Toy Trading provided the playground set enjoyed by the children, as they pranced in the snowfall made possible by a snow machine that produces biodegradable artificial snow.

Real-life snow will again fall on various parts of the hotel on Dec. 31, 7-10 p.m.

A life-sized Gingerbread House in the lobby as well as in the Alabang Town Center completes the White Christmas theme of the hotel until Dec. 31.

It features homemade pralines, Oresander stollens, Swiss chocolate brunzli and traditions, English fruit cake, duck liver pate, wines, Christmas cookies, cheeses, assorted cold cuts and Christmas hampers. Ca. 7508888

Classic carol

EDSA Shangri-La transforms the classic carol into a visual treat for its guests this Christmas. Upon entering the hotel, guests are greeted by bright lights, the Nativity scene and rows of pine trees dressed up with radiant ornaments. The Lobby is adorned with large wreaths accented by grape ivy, pinecones and replicas of a partridge in a pear tree, turledoves, French hens, calling birds, gold rings, geese-a-laying, swans-a-swimming, maids-a-milking, ladies dancing, lords-a-leaping, pipers piping and drummers drumming.

The Lobby Lounge displays a 25-ft tall pine tree decked with hundreds of metallic balls, musical instruments, stars, gold trimmings and carvings of gifts.

Special treats

THE WESTIN Philippine Plaza offers gift ideas like food and beverage certificates for dinner at the Ponds de Barbecue, the Longest Buffet at Cafe Plaza, China Sea Lariat. Italian feast for five persons at Alliere or five vouchers for two hours use with snacks at The Westin Kids Club. You may also give a Stay and Spa Room certificate that combines an overnight stay, buffet breakfast and choice of spa treatments for two.

At the Christmas Chocolate Collection Corner of Cafe Plaza, cakes, pralines, cookies and pastries are offered. The Westin can also customize hampers to suit your preference and discriminating tastes. Complete your holiday feasts with ham, Turkey, salmon and prime ribs prepared in the traditional style of home-cooked meals. Call 5515555.

Party package

HOLIDAY Inn Galleria Manila offers the Penthouse Party Package. A group of 15 can enjoy the view of the metropolis from the 29th floor of the hotel while indulging in an assortment of hot and cold canapés. An hour-long open bar of local beer, soda, juices, standard drinks and house wines will add excitement to the event. The package comes with an overnight stay in the suite for four persons. Call 6349902/27.

Accommodation offers

THE PENINSULA Manila presents concerts, festive meals and accommodation offers. The highlights include, Yuletide Season Afternoon Tea until Dec. 31, Call 8872888/8103456.

Exhibit of dazzling Christmas trees

A BIG hit since it was first started in 1995, InterContinental Manila's annual Christmas Tree exhibit is a much-awaited event. Some of the best names in visual arts, fashion and design have accepted the hotel's invitation to make trees that would best mirror the spirit of Christmas while giving it their individual stamp of creativity. On display at the lobby until Jan. 6, 2005 are creations by Archie Chua, Racy Cuna, Gerry Gonzalez, Lito Perez, Borge Ramos, Pita Rufino and The Sari-Sari Group.

Special family Christmas packages

DAYS Hotel has a special Christmas menu package for families Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 in the Tagaytay, Batangas, Mactan Cebu, and Subic branches.

Guests can enjoy their menu package for only P695 per person! The meal includes a salad or soup, a glass of wine, the main entrée and a dessert.

The Tagaytay, Batangas and Mactan Cebu branches also offer family Christmas packages for guests. Each package includes overnight stay in a Superior Room for two adults and two children with plated breakfast for only P3,800 as well as a Special Gift Certificate that entitles bearer to a 40-percent discount on published rates on their next visit.

Days Hotel Iloilo offers 50-percent off on all rooms plus free buffet breakfast until Jan. 2. Its special International Christmas buffet is available until today.

At Days Inn Suites Subic, two adults and two children can stay overnight in a Standard Room with full breakfast for P2,100. In Palyas de Lucena, they can stay in one of the bamboo cottages/villas for four persons (twin beds), with breakfast, for P1,650. Promo is good until Jan. 1, Call (033)3373297 in Iloilo and 8110809 in Manila.

The world's best sandbox

When things go wrong in this country, one has only to go to the beach to be reminded that the Philippines will always be beautiful

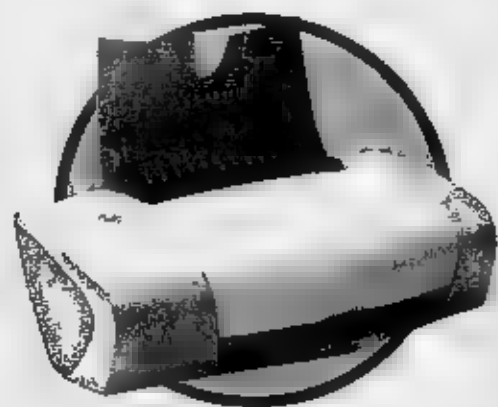
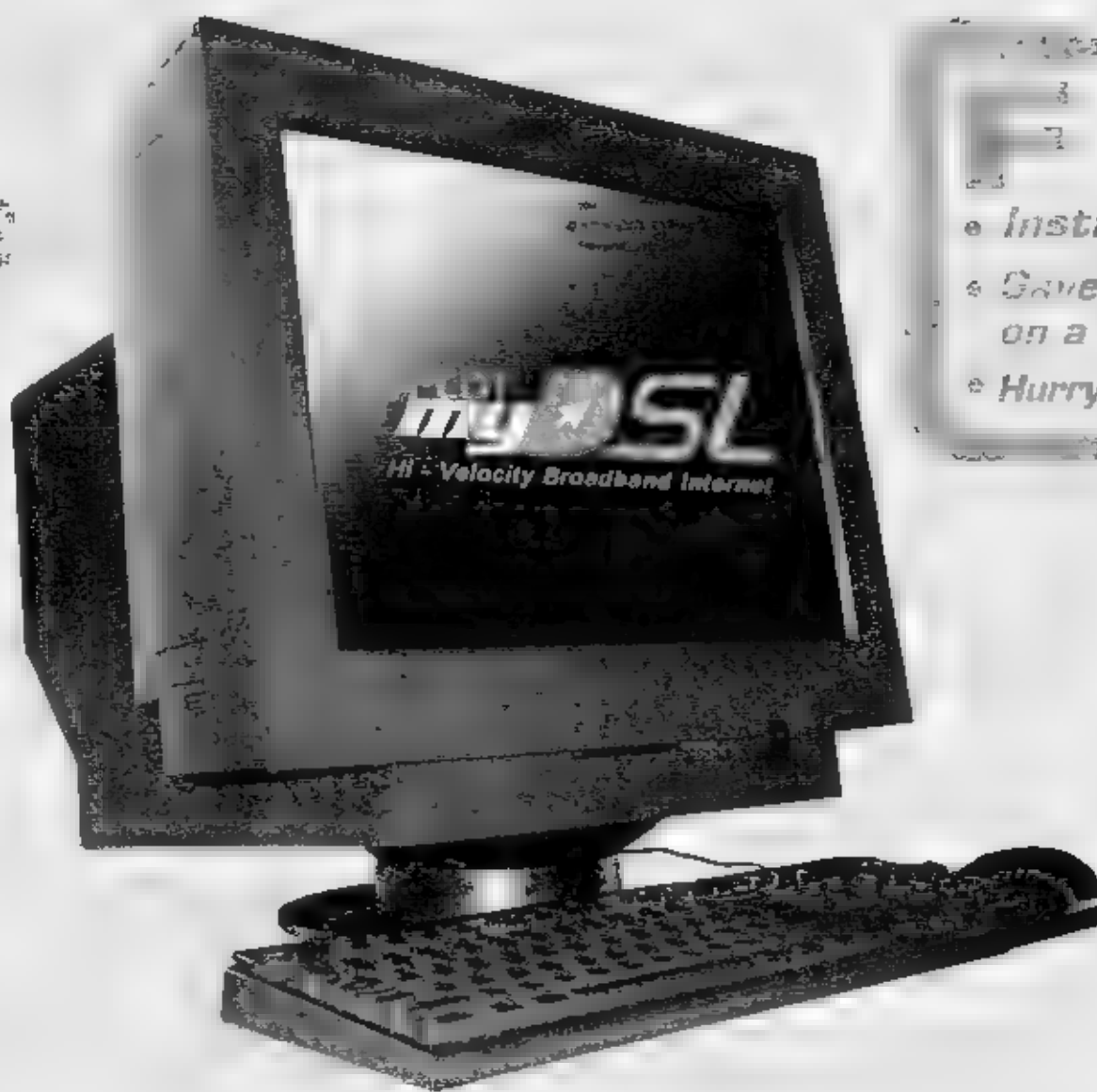
STORY ON PAGE H2

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PC retail price is Php 20,000, inclusive of VAT
Free Printer promo will be applied under DTI NCR E 1877 series of 2004

Mechanics

- Promo is available at the following SM Malls: Megamall, North Edsa, Southmall, Centerpoint and Lucena.
- Promo period is from December 24, 2004 to January 9, 2005.
- A lock-in period of 24 months or two (2) years is required for PLDT myDSL.
- PLDT myDSL applicant should have a PLDT residential landline service.
- Should the applicant decide to terminate the service within the lock-in period, a three (3) month MSF depending on subscribed PLDT myDSL plan plus the discount/savings shall be charged.
- Get the FREE printer when you purchase a Black and White ink cartridge (P950) or a Colored ink cartridge (P1200). The printer can be claimed at the PLDT Business Office.

SEE FLYERS FOR DETAILS

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3427, Series of 2004



Fiesta is time for spiritual renewal

LED by the 2005 fiesta caretaker Dr. Gil Villacorte, the fiesta of San Ildefonso on Jan. 23 in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, will take the spiritual path, unlike in the past.

In preparation for the event, an Advent recollection was given by Msgr. Sabino Vengco. On Jan. 13, a motorcade will visit all barrios that received replicas of the saint to invite them to the Novena Masses. Novenas will begin at 5 a.m., Jan. 14 followed by a Mass at 6 a.m. officiated by Infanta Bishop Rolando Tria Tirona and other priests.

Celebrants in the subsequent Novena Masses are Msgr. Sabino Vengco, Msgr. Manuel Villaroman, Msgr. Andy Valera, Fr. Albert Suatengco, Fr. Pablo Legazpi, Fr. Nick Lalug, Fr. Allan Antonio, Fr. Johann Sebastian, Bishop Cirilo Almaro and Malolos Bishop Jose Oliveros.

Working closely with the parish priest Fr. Rolando Ilustre Ang, San Ildefonso Mayor Edgardo Galvez and engineer Paul Cruz, who renovated 120 old churches in 1984, Dr. Villacorte is undertaking an extensive propagation of the devotion to San Ildefonso who is proving to be a miraculous intercessor.

By being caretaker, Dr. Villacorte achieved the dream of his late father Catalino "Ninoy" Villacorte who wanted the job in 1967, but was not chosen. He died nine months later.

The doctor also organized the *Hernandad de San Ildefonso* composed of past presidents or caretakers of the fiesta. It would conduct projects for the church and propagate the devotion to San Ildefonso. The group wants to make the church a national shrine.

Members of the *hermandad* are: Herminio Cruz, Ange, Carabalios, Enrique Vandez IV, Mario Lipana, Mamerto Francisco, Rodolfo Samanego, Cnsanto Francisco, Johnny Magbitang, Victoriano Cruz, Migue. Vinculado Jr., Rosendo Agullo, Fortunato Serrano, Ernesto Trinidad, Francisco Cuevas Jr., Jorge Toledo, Leandro Borja, engineer Paul Cruz, Angel Anarcon, Patricia Reyes Jr., Antonio Salao, Benjamin Luna, Romeo Veron, Fortunato Samaniego, Rolando Ito, Benjamin Diaz and Albino de Guzman.

A nobleman

St. Ildephonsus (San Ildefonso) is highly regarded in Spain and closely associated with devotion to the Blessed Virgin which he fostered in his famous work concerning her perpetual virginity. Aside from the one already mentioned, he wrote a history of the Spanish Church during the first two-thirds of the sev-

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Darang



St. Ildephonsus (San Ildefonso) is highly regarded in Spain and closely associated with devotion to the Blessed Virgin which he fostered in his famous work concerning her perpetual virginity

enth century, "Concerning Famous Men."

Miracles

Fr. Johann Sebastian, parish priest of the Sacred Heart Church in Pinaod, San Ildefonso, Bulacan, was conceived after his parents prayed to San Ildefonso and to the Mother of Perpetual Help. His mother had difficulty conceiving. He is an only child.

Lola Mercedes Vanguardia Cruz, mother of Paul Cruz, said when her husband Benjamin was asked to be president of the 1981 fiesta they said "yes", even if they had no money, because no one should refuse the saint. Their friends and neighbors helped them raise the money.

Several days after the fiesta, their son Paul, who finished industrial engineering in Mapua, left to work in Saudi Arabia. In thanks-giving for all God's blessings through San Ildefonso, Paul is now restoring the bell tower in time for the fiesta.

Doctors who are devotees of the saint are heading a medical mission as part of the fiesta. They are Drs. Florida Ito and Pagasa Guanlao.

There will be a serenata to the Virgin on

Jan. 22. Bishop Oliveros will say the fiesta Mass at 9 a.m. on Jan. 23. Msgr. Sabino Vengco's Mass will be aired over GMA-7 at 5 a.m. on Jan. 23. Those who wish for prayer estampitas can write to me. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Procession theme

The procession will be at 8 p.m. on Jan. 23. Devotees are requested to answer San Ildefonso's request: "My children, I will pass by your house. Light my path and place your intention at my feet or whisper your prayer to me."

Counting our blessings

Now that some of us wake up at 3 a.m. (because we are growing old, they say, we have more time to count our blessings, despite the negative things happening now), here are a few things that help us forget the bad things in life: 1) the "Practical Cook" show of Nancy Reyes on ABC-5 at 9 a.m. every Sunday; 2) the fruit cake of Judy Lao; and 3) the presence of Kythe, Inc., which has made itself responsible for the psycho-social care of hospitalized children, especially the poor. For information on how to help, call Girlie Garcia at 9226370 or 9280611.

New Year rituals

With the New Year coming, it is time to give old clothes and shoes to charitable organizations of your choice. Rearrange the furniture. Clear the table for vases of daisies, find 12 kinds of fruits and put them on the table on New Year's Eve, wear a polka-dotted blouse or shirt to attract prosperity, and make it a New Year's resolution to go to Holy Mass every Sunday, if you have been negligent before.

And if you want to know your fortune, visit Nestor Argelio, the psychic at Tempura Misano at the Hyatt Hotel or text him 0919-5854863.

Albert and angels

Boy Ponce who was Albert Seeland's classmate in Malate School dreamt that Albert was with Mama Mary and the angels. Albert was wearing a chef's uniform. Albert died Dec. 24, 2000. To us, his friends, he was part of our Christmases and New Years, so we ask him to pray for us.

Our friends Pando Manipon and Oskar Peralta did the *helen* of Harrison Plaza Chapel and the Sacred Heart Parish in Dao St., Makati, respectively. God gave them so much talent that they have to use it for His greater glory.

A blessed New Year to all!



SAN Ildefonso, patron saint of San Ildefonso, Bulacan, marks feast day on Jan. 23.



DR. Gil Villacorte, caretaker of San Ildefonso Fiesta 2005, leads spiritual renewal.



ENGINEER Paul Cruz became fiesta caretaker in 1985, to say 'thank you' for his blessings.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

READY?

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1 Reclined a	50 Amenity for	68 Utter joy	9 Creates sour	44 Connecticut	84 Pick-ups
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14 Judging	54 See 75	70 Footwear is	11 Baseball	46 Hertz rival	86 Sashes
20 One-celled	55 Across	71 Against steel	12 Surname	47 Frozen	87 Catch some
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	75 Portending	92 Portending	93 Elia of	67 Puerto	107 11th-cent.
			94 Comics	68 Prize	108 Norvegian
					109 King
					110 Danson

answer on page C3

Ménage à trois isn't her game

DEAR Emily,

I am a 38-year-old survivor of an annulled marriage and I have two sons. I fell in love with a policeman, single, and nine years younger than me. Six months into our relationship, he admitted to having a girlfriend a few months before he met me.

This explained the questionable whereabouts and unanswered text messages and cell phone calls for three to four days. He said he's "unreachable" during police "operations." (Though he said) he loved me more than the other woman, he vaguely hinted I (should) accept the situation (as) "there are only two" of us!

I don't nag and I don't put pressure on him. In fact, I'm so cool and relaxed. He told me to wait awhile because he could not separate from the other woman immediately. The other woman was "separated," he said. But I heard from a common friend that the husband was an overseas Filipino worker.

He said the other woman paid "our" boyfriend's rent, car expenses and daily allowance. I never did that. The other woman started to befriend me, but (apparently she) just wanted to monitor the whereabouts of our boyfriend. I stayed away from her when I found out she had been trying to destroy me all this time.

(I had this) relationship for a year and five months. Though I still love him so much, I've (got-ten) out of the nightmare. I've made up my mind that those two will not hurt me anymore.

He sends text messages and invites me out, but I make excuses not to see him. I pray and hope that I can find somebody who's worthy of my love and sincerity.

ROSEVINNE

Haven't you had enough trauma and learned plenty of lessons from your annulment to gauge guys like this policeman? Methinks you've become a glutton for pain, considering you even "shared" him with another woman for a while.

But who can blame you? Everyone becomes a fool when it comes to love. Everyone—from the intellectually superior to the intellectu-

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Marcelo



ally challenged—has fallen victim to love. As the saying goes, "There's none so blind as those who refuse to see." Why? Because love is both a hunger and an addiction.

Accept that phase as part of your learning process. But get out of that cycle of failures as your relationships—fast! Hone your instincts to detect deceit and lies. It's a jungle out there and predators are waiting to pounce on vulnerable women—and they're plenty!

Move on, move on and don't look back! It's hard but you've got to start somewhere.

Two-week romance

I am a 29-year-old manager in a call center. I met him a month ago while I was having my car cleaned. He asked about my car being a car buff myself, we had a good conversation. He (got) my business card.

Fifteen minutes after we parted, he called my cell phone and asked me to go out with him. I agreed to meet him that weekend. He then constantly called and sent text messages... (that whole) week. He was the something I'd been missing since I broke up with my ex a year ago.

He is the son of the owner of a big company and he is two years younger than me. We talked for hours that day and I found him very likable. We were "on" two days after that meeting. I felt alive again barely two weeks after meeting him.

When we met again, he said he'd like to meet my parents that weekend and would call to confirm the time. I waited and waited and waited. He never called and he never came. I realized I'd been had.

I didn't hear from him for a week. When he finally sent a text message, I ignored it. He called that same day as if nothing hap-

pened. I told him that if he didn't have the right intentions then he should not call or text me again.

He said he could explain, but I refused to listen to him. He wanted a second chance.

I still like him but I don't know if I can trust him. He still sends text messages and calls, but I refuse to be made a fool again.

I keep thinking of and hanging on to the special two weeks we had. Deep inside I really want to know him better. Do I use my head this time or give him another chance? I'm so confused.

MAY

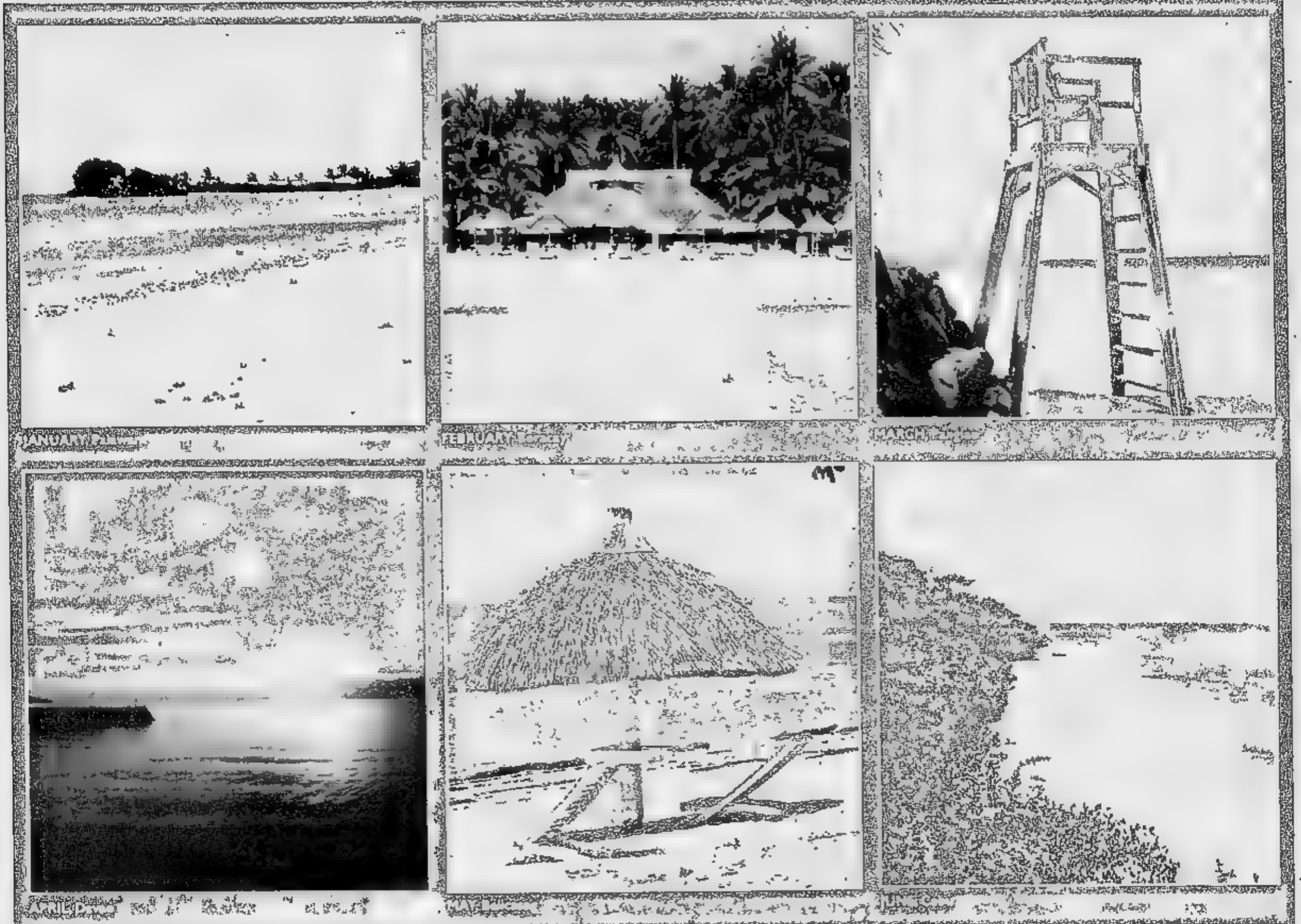
You met, you talked, you went steady—all in a span of two days. He was like a window shopper—he liked what he saw, went in, looked at it up close, had enough of it after a while, and left. Can't blame the guy for being what he is. And you were so gullible to think he liked you enough to have you wrapped up and brought home. Nah!

Sure, society is very permissive these days. Sure, anything goes among young people. But it is inherent in men... It is the nature of man—to hunt, and they love the thrill of it. The harder it is to catch the prey, the sweeter the triumph is. You were a siring duck. You amused him for a while, then he moved on.

Don't romanticize the two weeks you "had" with him. C'mon. You had nothing! You two played the flirting game with words—nice words, sexy words, thrilling words but words are just like soapbuds. They sparkle, they mesmerize, but they're blown away by the wind never to be seen again. You were foolish enough to paint an idyllic picture with his beautiful soapbuds.

Forget him because he is absolutely not in your emotional wavelength. Think of him as just a dream, a nice one if you like. You're awake now and you're back to reality. And reality bites.

E-mail the author at emarcelo@inquirer.com.ph, subject: Lifestyle, or send your letters to the Inquirer office. Listen to Ms. Marcelo co-host the program "Kalikasan Vigilante," 7:15-8:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, divBR 104.3 FM.



The world's best sandbox

Text and photos by Butch Jimenez
Contributor

I WANT my kids to grow up knowing that the Philippines is a beautiful country. Not just because they are Filipinos, but because it really is a beautiful country.

And if there's one thing the Philippines can be proud of, it's her beaches. No doubt, the Philippines is the world's best sandbox.

Every year, we set out for some of the beaches our country is blessed with. And, always, I walk around with my digital camera and try to document their natural beauty.

One thing I like about photography is pictures are like fingerprints or snowflakes... each one is unique, and can

never be repeated. Pictures may look similar, but somehow never exactly the same.

For some reason, God paints His landscape, His sky, His lighting, His wave, different every second.

I've made a calendar to show the beauty of our country to those who have not yet realized how wonderful she is.

The pictures in the calendar capture some of the beaches we visited this year—a year-round reminder of how gorgeous the Philippines is.

When trouble besets our nation, I just head for the beach. Somehow, it helps me realize that no matter what, the Philippines is a beautiful country.

If you want a copy of the calendar, please e-mail me at butchjimenez@yahoo.com. The calendar is free, though I will ask you to please tell everybody that if he or she is looking for the world's best sandbox, you're living in it.

THE AUTHOR
with his family
at Pearl Farm,
Davao





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SHE WEAVES a certain kind of magic, according to Viva starmaker "Boss" Vic del Rosario.

Sarah, phenomenal popstar

SHE'S only 16, but Sarah Geronimo is already a certified complex entertainer.

She has proven it as the star of "Sarah: The Teen Princess," which ran for two seasons on ABS-CBN. In that teleseries, Sarah's versatility shone—she danced, sang and did heavy drama, and achieved it all with flying colors.

She even did comedy, appearing as a guest on "OK Fine Whatever," with mainstays Aga Muhlach, Bayani Agbayani and Edu Manzano.

Sarah also hosted "Morning Star" along with friends and fellow champions Mark Bautista, Rachele Ann Go, Christian Bautista and Erik Santos. She also does hosting chores on "Asap Mania."

But beyond acting and hosting,

Sarah is first of all a singer. Her very first album, "Popstar" from Viva Records, turned platinum in just a few months. It also produced several hits, including "Forever's Not Enough" and "To Love You More."

Even before her second album, "Sweet Sixteen," was released, its carrier single, "How Could You Say You Love Me," was already No. 1 on FM stations and music video channels. A month later, "Sweet Sixteen" was already a gold album.

Sarah and her gang have performed three at the Araneta Coliseum. Their "Night of the Champions" concert was such a hit it was staged a second time. Because it was taped and shown on ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel, the group of champions was readily booked for a US tour that covered eight states.

Viva Boss Vic del Rosario himself was witness to the enthusiastic reception that Sarah received at every stop of the tour. Boss Vic acknowledged that The Filipino Channel helped a lot in introducing Sarah to Filipino audiences in the US.

Sarah capped 2004 with several awards from the Aliw and Awit awards for her first album. She was Awit's Most Promising Female Artist.

Sarah also brought home Awit Awards for Best New Female Recording Artist for "Forever's Not Enough" and Best Dance Song for "Sa Iyo."

She has just renewed her contract as an endorser of Jollibee. She also endorses Charnee and, more recently, Pacific Internet Surf Maxx which maintains her official website—sarahgeronimo.com.ph.

Before the year ends, her fans will see Sarah in the movie "Lastikman," Viva Films' entry in the Metro Manila Film Festival.

Sarah stars opposite Mark Bautista, who is in the title role. The movie also features Cherie Gil, John Estrada, Danilo Barrios, Elizabeth Oropesa and Tuesday Vargas. Sen. Bong Revilla as Captain Barbeli, Anne Curtis as Dyesabel and Joel Torre as Lastikman's father.

"Lastikman" is directed by Mac Alejandre, who also directed "Captain Barbeli."

What makes Sarah's rise in show biz so phenomenal?

"She weaves a certain kind of magic that captivates her audience," says Boss Vic. "You should see the fans practically step on one another just to get close to her."

No Christmas mega-movie for Hollywood

LOS ANGELES—Hollywood's studios are expected to rake in a possibly record \$9.4 billion at domestic box offices this year, but the lack of a Christmas season smash like last year's final "Lord of the Rings" film will crimp overall ticket sales.

The estimated box-office figure for the United States and Canada should beat 2003's \$9.27 billion by about 1.4 percent, and may squeak by 2002's record \$9.3 billion, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc., a box-office tracking service.

But admissions, or the number of tickets actually sold, are seen falling to roughly 1.5 billion from 1.53 billion last year and 1.6 billion in 2002.

The higher box-office take is being fueled by a rise in average ticket prices, which Exhibitor Relations president Paul Dergarabedian said may wind up between \$6.10 and \$6.25 per ticket in 2004, up from \$6.03 in 2003 and \$5.80 in 2002.

Art-house fare

"Many of the films that did well (with audiences) are not necessarily the films that

made a lot of money," said Dergarabedian, noting art-house fare like "Napoleon Dynamite" and the current critical hit "Sideways."

He added that two big hits, "The Passion of the Christ" and "Fahrenheit 9/11," were released outside the major studios, where the \$100 million-plus blockbusters normally

SHOW STOPPER

The holidays, in which 20 percent of total annual ticket sales are made, has many crowd pleasers but lacks a mega-movie like 2003's "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," which went on to win an Oscar for best picture.

Sony Pictures Entertainment, a unit of Japanese electronics maker Sony Corp., is on the way to ending the year at No. 1 in domestic market share with more than \$1.3 billion at box offices. Next is Time Warner Inc.'s Warner Bros. with \$1.25 billion, according to studio estimates.

No. 1 again

It is the second time in three years Sony has been No. 1 and the third straight year of



WANTED: A smash hit like last year's "Lord of the Rings: Return of the King"

a \$1 billion-plus box office. It is Warner's fourth straight year of \$1 billion-plus in sales.

Sony had a combination of big-budget hits like "Spider-Man 2" and low-budget stars such as horror flick "The Grudge," which cost Sony \$10 million and racked up \$110 million.

"We had a really diverse slate this year, and ... certainly we pulled off one of the surprises with 'Grudge,'" said Jeff Blake, Sony Pic-

tures Entertainment vice chair.

Funding movies at the high and low ends of the cost range—avoiding the middle—marks a trend of recent years that studio executives expect will continue in 2005.

"Spider-Man 2" was the No. 2 US film of 2004 with \$373 million in domestic ticket sales, behind \$436 million for DreamWorks Animation's "Shrek 2."

Rounding out the top five were "Passion" with \$370 million, Warner Bros.' "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" with \$249 million and Disney/Pixar's "The Incredibles" at \$236 million and climbing.

\$150M-\$200M

After a tough start with "The Alamo," Disney will likely end at No. 3 in market share with \$1.1 billion, crossing the \$1-billion threshold for the ninth time in 11 years.

The year also was marked by production budgets for major films in the \$150-million to \$200-million range, and studio executives expect high costs to continue into 2005.

Other events to look for in 2005 will be a new studio chief at Viacom Inc.'s Paramount Pictures, a new film distribution partner for one-time Disney ally Pixar Animation Studios Inc., and the way in which a Sony-led investor group plans to run Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc.

Hollywood's other major studios include Universal Pictures, owned by General Electric Co. and France's Vivendi Universal, as well as Twentieth Century Fox, controlled by News Corp. Inc. A major independent is Lions Gate Entertainment Corp. Reuters



PRICELESS PRAISE. Many movies that audiences liked did not exactly make a lot of money, such as "Sideways" (left) and "Napoleon Dynamite."



Busloads of kids, parents visit scene of Michael Jackson 'lewd acts'

LOS ANGELES—Dozens of children visited Michael Jackson's Neverland Valley Ranch last week at the invitation of the pop superstar who is awaiting trial on child molestation charges.

Three buses containing mostly grade-school children and some parents as well as five minivans drove through the gates of Jackson's sprawling estate in the foothills above Santa Barbara, California, Reuters photographers said. It was unclear where the children had come from, Jackson's spokeswoman said on



JACKSON

Thursday such invitations were regularly extended to groups including churches.

A Reuters photographer said the children appeared excited and happy and that one mother said she expected to spend the day at Neverland, which has theme-park

style rides, a miniature train and a small zoo.

It was not known whether Jackson, 46, was at the event or would meet his guests.

The entertainer is free on bail awaiting trial set for late January on

a 10-count indictment of child molestation. Jackson has pleaded innocent.

Prosecutors say that it was at Neverland, almost two years ago, that Jackson pled a boy with alcohol, engaged in "lewd acts" with him, then conspired with his staff to cover up his misdeeds.

Police have raided the ranch twice looking for evidence to use at trial.

Jackson has frequently opened his home to children and other visitors. He threw a party there in December 2003 for about 300 well-wishers, supporters and family friends a month after his arrest.

Reuters

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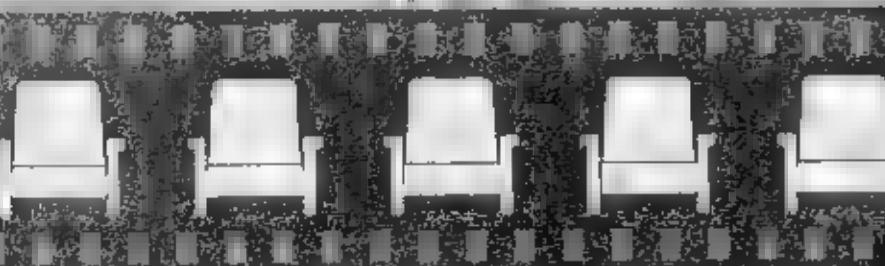
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KIDDIE TIME. "Always savor moments with your kids," says Maricel on "Parenting Roadshow," a series of seminars. "Have fun while learning with them."

Maricel Laxa teaches parenting without pain

FOR MARICEL Laxa-Pangibnan, one of the most challenging aspects of parenting is molding children into responsible individuals that embody good values. Crucial in achieving this is devoting quality time to them.

Balancing time can be especially tough for working parents like Maricel—mother of four, celebrity, newspaper columnist, author of parenting books, seminar/training resource person, and product endorser.

"We accept it as a reality that our time will be consumed by other things," she says. "So we set priorities, but on top of all these should be our family."

Maricel believes that the most efficient way to teach children is by con-

sistent example; and that the values you want to inculcate in them are best imbibed during moments of togetherness.

Thus, no matter how busy Maricel and her husband Anthony are, they always find time to be with their kids Ella, Donny, Hannah, and Benjamin. They also devote time to nurturing their relationship as a couple. By being involved in their kids' world, Maricel explains, parents will understand them and better relate to them.

Optimum health

Involvement also helps Maricel ensure that her kids' every need is met. She keeps them fit and healthy because she believes that optimum

health is the foundation of a fruitful life. If her kids experience pain or fever, she is always close by, knowing that these may just be symptoms of more serious illnesses. In treating pain and fever, Maricel says she trusts only Biogesic for Kids, a product that she endorses.

"It is fast-acting," she says.

With the children free from sundry aches, the family is able to share quality time and enjoy doing things together. Maricel advises parents: "Always savor moments with your kids. Have fun while learning with them. This is a good way to teach them to be open to life and to not be afraid of making mistakes."

Maricel shared more parenting tips during the recently concluded "Parenting Roadshow," a series of seminars conducted by Biogesic for Kids and The Parenting Company.

The project ran from October till early this month, touring seven schools across Metro Manila, educating parents on various subjects, including communication that promotes learning and builds self-esteem, and basic first aid for children.

Resource speakers were Maricel and Anthony, The Parenting Company's health and medical consultant Dr. Donna Simpa, and retreat and seminar counselor Felchiz Buizon.

SHOW TIME

'Party @ d Pond' in Cavite

THE 888 Fishing Place Bar and Restaurant in Binakayan, Kawit, Cavite, will stage a yearender party on Dec. 29 starting at 7 p.m.

The show bands Feedback and Revive will lead the non-stop "Party @ d Pond." The party will be powered by Musak Pro Mobile System and sponsored by Maiver Supremacy.

Tickets are at P100. 888Fishing Place for fishing enthusiasts is located on Cavendish Road in Binakayan, Kawit only about 18 km from Manila.

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'STARTIST' HOST
Gwyneth Albarrachin is a new addition to television as host of "Startist," the first reality-based training on TV for future singers. The new show is aired on UNTV from Monday to Friday, 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Presented by the Center for Pop Music Philippines, "Startist" can be seen on UHF Channel 37, SkyCable Channel 95 or Home Cable Channel 59. Also a professional model, Gwyneth is a second year college student at the University of Asia and the Pacific.

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5 SO HAPPY TOGETHER 12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
7 MANO PO 3 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 11:35 2:00 4:25 6:50 9:15
9 LASTIKMAN 11:55 2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15	10 Opens Soon!

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7 MANO PO 3 11:05 1:20 3:35 5:50 8:05	

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ACT-3	ORIGANAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGANG KALAKAS PAPAISAY
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CORONET B	A MAN APWIT
QUEZON-1	BIGTUB NG PORK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
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CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
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CINEMA-15	THE 21ST OF JUNE

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2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00	7 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN 11:50 2:25 4:55 7:25 9:50	8 MANO PO 3 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 SIGAW 11:40 2:10 4:40 7:10 9:40	9 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 AISHITE IMASU 11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00	10 MANO PO 3 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

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AIZA SEGUERRA



LORNA TOLENTINO



RICA PERALEJO

Celebrity photographer, manipulator



BOYABUNDA

DOMINIQUE James' "hyperreal" digitally manipulated photographs are his newest interpretations and reconstructions of celebrity portraiture, his specialty.

The famous faces emerge, almost phantasmagorically, through layers of a jumble of odd symbols, visual metaphors and arcane references.

Lorna Tolentino's lovely face peers out through a snarl of taut strings like a violin's. Judy Ann Santos is re-drawn as a comic strip heroine.

Bold new process

"Mastery of digital technology plays a large part in it," says James, one of the country's first professional photographers to exploit the creative and commercial potentials of digital imaging technology when the first generation of professional-grade digital cameras were introduced four years ago.

"But what is perhaps more essential in this bold new process is the power to use an array of exciting imaging tools in bringing to life never-before-seen creative visions," he adds.

At first glance, the "hyperrealistic" celebrity portraits of James appear whimsical, fanciful, and outrageous. The profusion of design styles, graphic elements and color combinations seems unruly. Upon closer inspection, there emerges a neatly ordered logic and a clarity of meaning.

"It is a process of constructing a rich, eloquent visual material" printed vividly on Epson paper and ink, explains the photographer.

He compares it to understanding poetry wherein the first reading reveals nothing but fleeting and jagged impressions. Upon repeated readings or, in the case of hyperreal images, more discerning viewing, the images begin to

speak in a new visual language that everyone understands.

Child-woman Aiza

Take the portrait of Aiza Seguerra, with her child-like clasped hands and kewpie lips and round uncloaked eyes reflected in the bright orbs strung across her front. She recalls the charmingly sassy child performer on a noontime TV show who captured everyone's hearts years ago.

"Some people may find it amusing to see how she has turned out today," says James. "But the Aiza that we know today and have come to accept and love is the Aiza that we actually and surprisingly want. In my hyperreal rendition of her, I wanted to reconcile my idea of who Aiza was as a child and who she is now as a young adult coming to terms with herself."

James sees Judy Ann Santos as a pop goddess, a comic-strip diva. "I used the comic-strip panels and the dreamy swirls of clouds as idiomatic expressions of her life, her achievements, and her stardom."

Effective Gladys

Having photographed Gladys Reyes several times, James admits to being still amazed at how far removed her real-life persona is from the bitchy characters she plays on TV and in the movies.

"This demonstrates how truly effective she is as an actress," he says. "I gave Gladys a vampy look that borders on punk. And then I added a dash of sophistication through graphic elements in black and dark greens with touches of red. It goes well with her skintight leather pants. Gladys is a chameleon when it comes to role portrayals, and a truly good person in real life."

In creating a hyperreal photo image, Dominique James begins with a thought or a concept of how he wants the image to come out.

"Sometimes the intended re-



RUFFA GUTIERREZ

sult is not reached, particularly if a celebrity is not a caricature of her or his own fame, as in the case of Marjorie Barretto. But it often leads to surprising results. I used Marjorie's entrancing smile as a basis for constructing a quasi-religious iconic image."

Dark, complex Lorna T

It was as difficult to hyperrealize Lorna Tolentino, one of the actresses I deeply admire," says James. "Even the simplest emotion becomes laden with layers of meaning when she acts it out," he says. "In real life, she's bubbly and amiable, but you can sense the strong currents of emotions behind the warm and open smiles

and laughter.

"I've always viewed Lorna as a dark, complex and sophisticated person. When I photographed her, I wasn't disappointed."

To view some of the photo prints, visit Katha, Epson's photo prints gallery, at the Digital Exchange in Glorietta, Ayala Center in Makati City.

For more info on Epson, visit www.epson.com. To retrieve a free PDF portfolio file of the complete set of hyperreal photographs of Dominique James, e-mail your request to studio@dominique-james.com. For more information on Dominique James, e-mail fo@dominiquejames.com or visit www.dominiquejames.com.

2 women and the rest of theM

HERE'S a tale of two women, both Filipinas, living in two cities across the globe.

One is a mathematician and a dottore in filosofia who lives in Florence, Italy. The other is an eminent jazz singer but with a genre-free versatility that has made her a draw in upscale bars, clubs and hotels in Manila.

Both have traveled many routes and in equivalent directions, before meeting at an intersection last year when they formed a friendship and parlayed shared interests in a CD collaboration.

The CD is "One of These Days," a new seven-song album released by N/A Records. It is a sophisticated collection. To call the music jazz would be accurate but limiting. While there's a "jazz waltz," there are also two ballads. Two cuts in the bebop tradition are balanced by music that's distinctly festive in the Afro-Cuban and Caribbean or bossa nova sense.

And the woman responsible for this versatile, listener-friendly entree is Faye Miravite, who adds art historian, poet, classical guitarist, jazz pianist, classical composer, and

business consultant to her intimidating resumé.

Bringing life to Faye's music is Sandra-Lim Viray, singer with the band JFK and Romy Posadas, and an entrepreneur who markets custom furniture designed by her husband Jun Viray, better known as a drummer of equal repute as his wife.

Sandra fronts a crack team of musicians assembled specially for the recording, which includes legendary jazz pianist Romy Posadas, Roger Herrera on bass, arranger Egay Avenir on guitar, Jun Viray on drums, with guest artists Mike Guevarra on soprano and tenor sax, Brandy Aranilla on trumpet and Italian percussionist Paolo Chiurlotto.

None of this would have happened if Faye hadn't come home to Manila on business in early 2003 and discovered the old Monks' Dream at Rockwell where Sandra, Jun and Egay regularly performed as JFK.

Sandra herself named both the band and the recording group theM, with a capital M, which could also be read as theM or Miravite Project, Faye's surname. The name worked on

many levels, just as the CD does.

"One of These Days," the title track, sets the spirited mood of the CD and sustains the foot-tapping tempo with "It's You." "If I Ever Write a Song," is an old school ballad, which was the first song Faye ever wrote in jazz style, influenced by her passion for Carmen McRae.

Sandra channels Billie Holiday in "Under Your Spell," except that Sandra makes Billie her own—clear, distinctive, with a small aching rasp in her voice. The CD ends like a perfect day, with the pleasurable, waltz-like "Blue."

The music of the album, which was recorded in three days, embraces an eclecticism that gets in all the right places, music that's feel-good, genial, celebratory, affecting.

theM Project's "One of These Days" is an assured piece of work. Faye and Sandra and the rest of theM should be credited for a CD that also stands as a shining example of music that bridges genres and crosses generational, gender, and yes, geographic divides.

Copies of the CD now available at all Tower Records and Music One outlets.



"ONE OF THESE Days." To call it jazz would be accurate but limiting.

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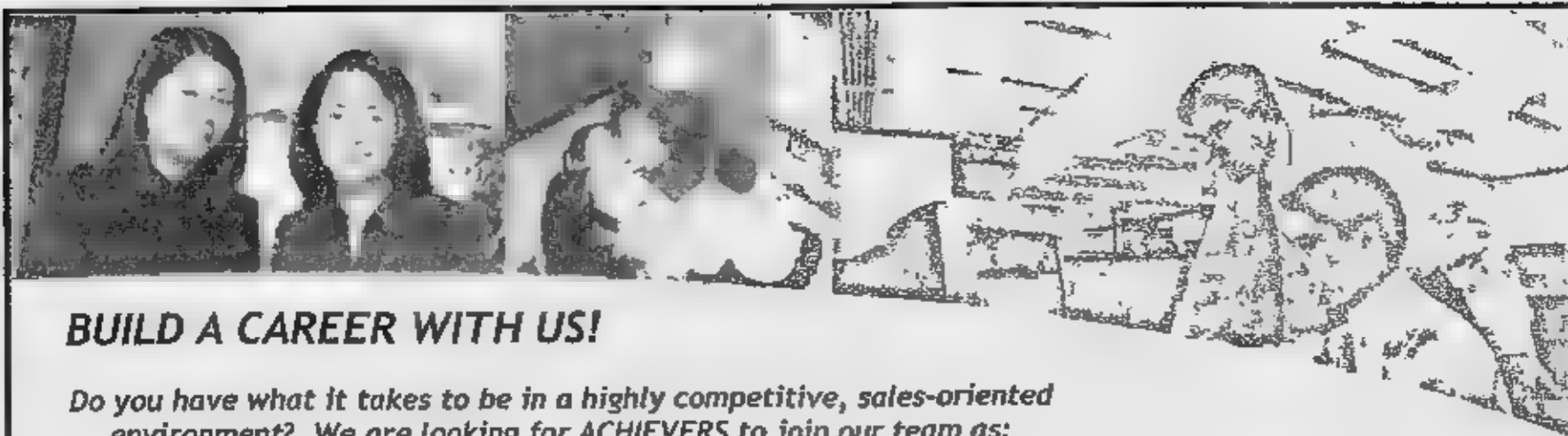
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Quantitative Key Measurement

- Delivers sales targets at all levels
- Ensure team responds to internal & external customer requests within 24 hours.
- Budget achievement - monthly
- Ensure planning tools are in place and utilized for effective sales & prospecting production rates
- Ensure all activities are aligned to all CWS sales & service manuals

Qualitative Key Measurement

- Sales activities are aligned to the country's plan
- Ensures that team meets agreed customer call rates
- Weekly one on one meeting with full team
- Sales to the price list. Discounts require approval
- Ensure all CWS corporate identity requirements are met

Core competencies

- Demonstrated high level of Sales Management in a service industry
- Ability to develop a team through "one on one" coaching & motivation
- Understands the sales "number games"
- History of solution selling
- High level of negotiation skills
- Strong customer service skills
- Leads from the front & "hands on"
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AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP, INC. (AIG) is a Fortune 500 company and the world's leading international insurance and financial services organization, with operations in approximately 130 countries.

AIG member companies serve commercial, institutional and individual customers through the most extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance networks of any insurer. AIG's global businesses also include financial services, retirement savings and asset management. The common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, as well as the stock exchanges in London, Paris, Switzerland and Tokyo.

AIG Business Processing Services, Inc. (AIG-BPSI) is a business process outsourcing (BPO) company serving the needs of AIG American General Life Insurance Companies. AIG-BPSI invites you to be part of its pioneering and fast-growing operations. Successful candidates will undergo intensive training and can look forward to a financially rewarding and enriching career.

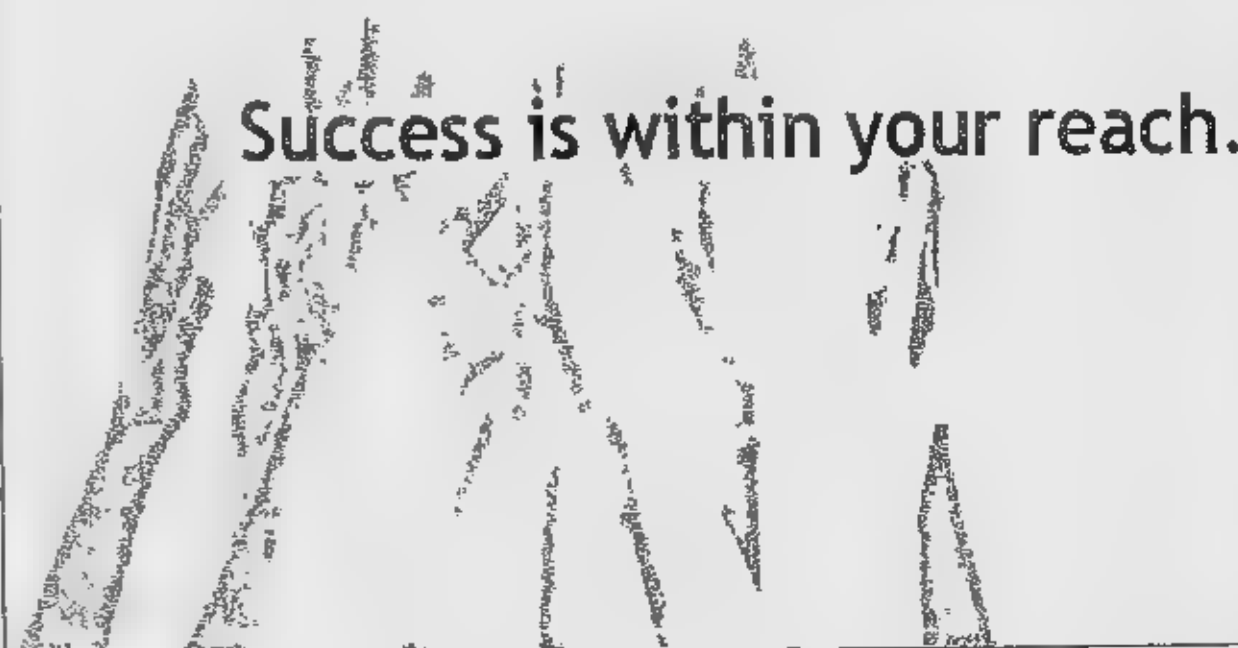
We're looking for Call Center Representatives

You will be reporting to the Call Center Team Leader and will be responsible for handling customer inquiries, providing general information on the company's products and services and processing requests of customers to update policy information.

Job Requirements

- Graduate of any four-year course
- Willing to work in the night shift
- Excellent verbal and written English communication skills
- Strong interpersonal and customer service skills
- Good listening skills
- Computer literate

Please submit your resume with 2x2 picture and TOR at the 8th Floor Philamlife Building, 1207 Acacia Avenue, Madrigal Business Park, Alabang, Muntinlupa City or email us your resume at BPSI-APPLICANTS@AIG.COM.



Success is within your reach.



Save the Children.

Save the Children Federation, Inc. is a US-based non-profit organization working in over forty countries, including the United States, and serving more than 15 million children and their families, implementing community development projects that create lasting, positive change in the lives of disadvantaged children and adolescents. Save the Children is currently searching for qualified candidates for the following vacancies:

NATIONAL PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE & SEXUAL HEALTH - Manila (Code: NC-ARSH)

Duties & responsibilities:

- Develop project proposals, program activities & materials. Provide technical support and assistance to program areas (West Visayas & Metro Manila); review all plans and activities relative to consistency with the program's framework.
- Monitor and assess the conduct of program activities and prepare narrative status report; ensure that all activities and outputs are accomplished on time and according to desired quality.
- Prepare all communications to partner agencies (USAID, DOH, etc.); serve as liaison and coordinate meetings with partner agencies at the national and local levels.
- Co-facilitate in workshops and trainings.

Minimum requirements:

- at least 5 years experience in developing and managing ARSH programs
- master's degree in Social Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, Social Work or Guidance and Counseling or equivalent experience
- willing to travel to program sites in Visayas and Mindanao
- excellent oral and written communication skills, particularly proposal writing
- proficient in MS Office applications

PROGRAM TECHNICAL COORDINATOR FOR ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL HEALTH - Manila (Code: PTC-ARSH)

Duties & responsibilities:

- Conceptualize and implement projects that support the accomplishment of ARSH goals and objectives of the Metro Manila Program.
- Provide technical inputs for all on-going activities/projects.
- Lead in monitoring, evaluating and documenting outcomes of program interventions.
- Ensure strong community participation and mobilization.
- Develop linkages with different organizations (government, non-governmental, private sector) towards building support network.
- Organize and sustain pool of community volunteers.
- Formulate a comprehensive capacity building plan for volunteers.

Minimum requirements:

- at least 5 years experience in community work, particularly with adolescents and with emphasis on reproductive health
- bachelor's degree in social work, community development, social/behavioral sciences, guidance & counseling, graduate studies in social work
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- computer literate

PROGRAM TECHNICAL COORDINATOR FOR MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH - Sulu (Code: PTC-MCH)

Duties & responsibilities:

- Develop and facilitate project interventions and ensure implementation at the community level.
- Oversee the evaluation and documentation of effects of project interventions.
- Organize inter-municipal trainings for partners.
- Attend planning meetings at the Integrated Provincial Health Office and at the regional level to strengthen and improve partnership coordination.
- Prepare proposals on Family Planning component to enhance project's quality and outreach.
- Assist in linking Municipal Health Committee and Barangay Health Committee as well as the Barangay Development Council with resource agencies.
- Assist in the conduct of special studies and researches.

Minimum requirements:

- at least 5 years experience in community health development projects with significant exposure in management of Maternal & Child Health programs
- educational background in medicine, nursing, public health or any health-related field; possession of a post graduate degree is highly desirable
- computer literacy is a must
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills, culture-sensitive

CURRICULUM SPECIALIST - Cotabato City (Code: CurSpec)

Duties & responsibilities:

- Review and identify strengths and weaknesses of existing curricula and instructional materials for math, science and English.
- Develop new curriculum units and lesson plans that address documented weaknesses in content and student performance.
- Assess learning needs of teachers & conduct initial train-the-trainer workshops for education faculty, Dep Ed supervisors and school-based master teachers.
- Create mentor teams to provide ongoing technical assistance to teachers.
- Establish systems for monitoring application of the curricula and instructional materials.
- Establish student baseline achievement data to evaluate student progress.

Minimum requirements:

- at least 5 years experience in curriculum and instructional materials development and teacher training and education, with focus on English, science or mathematics
- willing to travel frequently to project sites in Davao Region, Maguindanao, Misamis, North Cotabato; Tula, Sulu; and Davao, Zamboanga del Sur
- experience in Mindanao education, particularly in the public education sector
- familiarity with madrasah education issues
- master's degree in education or equivalent experience
- computer literacy, particularly MS Office applications

Attractive and highly competitive compensation and benefits package awaits the successful applicants. Interested parties may submit their resumes on or before January 7, 2005 to: *Thyroid Save the Children Federation, Inc.*, No. 1 Encarnacion Street corner Lapu Lapu Avenue, Magallanes Village, Makati City, Metro Manila. *Thyroid* (632) 853-0218. *Thyroid* e-mail: thyrroid@savechildren.org. Please indicate code in subject line.

Save the Children is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Creating lasting, positive change

www.go2canada.com
FREE ASSESSMENT

www.jobmarketonline.com

European based company

SAGE PLUS

is in need of

MULTIMEDIA DEVELOPER

- with basic Programming
- DataBase Security Management, and
- Flash Action Scripts expertise
- Graphic Design skills a plus

Fax resume to: T426-5125
or email to:
trvg2@yahoo.com
ccrogr2000@yahoo.com



**THE WORLD BANK
Requires A
Social Development and Operations Officer**

The World Bank Office Manila (WBOM) seeks a candidate with strong operational experience in social development, community-driven development (CDD), post-conflict work, and capacity building. The position will be an **Extended Term Consultant (ETC)** appointment for one year renewable for a second year based on satisfactory performance and on the mutual agreement of the Bank and the Consultant. It will be subject to local recruitment and offers an opportunity to work on development challenges facing the Philippines in a global development organization. Based in Manila, the selected candidate is expected to travel frequently within the country.

The successful candidate will work in the World Bank Office Manila (WBOM) under the technical guidance of the Social Development and Mindanao Teams and will report directly to the Social Sector Coordinator, Environment and Social Development Unit, WBOM.

Scope of Work

He/She will have the following major duties and responsibilities:

- Project Development and Implementation.** Participate in cross-sectoral task teams to design, document, supervise and evaluate projects with social dimensions of development and community-driven development, especially in Mindanao; assist task teams in identifying and working with appropriate government and civil society partners for project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Participate in supervision missions, mid-term reviews, and project completion missions.
- Post Conflict.** Work with the Social Development and Mindanao Teams to guide and advise the project and other stakeholders at the various levels to clarify sound institutional arrangements for peace and development work in Mindanao, and help design, mobilize and facilitate capacity building programs, including conflict management and conflict-resolution, for Mindanao-based and focused institutions.
- Local Government Support and Capacity Building.** Help to operationalize the focus on the local platform by looking for opportunities and designing programs/developing ways within existing and future CDD projects to increase the capacity of LGUs to take the lead in planning and implementing local projects using CDD approaches of participation, empowerment and good governance.
- Support Analytical and Policy Work.** Provide analytical support to teams working on harmonization of country systems, simplification of procedures on social safeguard policies; harmonization of CDD approaches across Bank-funded projects; and other analytical work undertaken by the Social Development Team.
- Other Tasks.** Assist in other tasks as assigned by the Social Sector Coordinator in various thematic areas, such as social safeguards, responsive and accountable public institutions, social protection, etc. Participate in meetings, workshops and other tasks as assigned.

Selection Criteria

- Master's degree or higher in anthropology, sociology, development economics, social welfare or other relevant social sciences.
- Strong operational background with at least 10 years of relevant professional experience in designing and implementing CDD projects.
- Strong work experience in post-conflict and conflict management programs, especially in Mindanao.
- Experience working with LGUs, especially on capacity building programs, is highly desirable.
- Effective oral and written communication skills in English and Tagalog, and proficient computer skills.
- Good interpersonal skills and demonstrated capacity to work effectively in teams.
- Willing to travel frequently to and stay for extended periods of time (3 to 4 weeks) in remote rural areas.

The World Bank offers a competitive compensation package based on the local market and attractive medical plan. Please send your application letter, with a comprehensive resume with details of your work experience, academic records, recent photo, references (at least three names with full contact details) not later than **Jan. 2, 2005** to **KSearch Asia Consulting, Inc.**, c/o Ruby Barcelona at 22/F 139 Corporate Centre, 139 Valero St., Sucoco Village, Makati City or email to rubib@ksearchasia.com or fax to 893-6259.

Only applicants who will be short-listed will be called upon for interview.

KSEARCH

A medium-sized commercial bank is in need of a dynamic, self-driven individual for the position of:

UNIT HEAD-Institutional Banking Group

Applicants must be between 30 to 40 years old. The position will have a rank ranging from AVP to VP, depending on the qualifications, and will be responsible for:

- Supervising a unit of two (2) Account Officers and one (1) Marketing Assistant;
- Managing and maximizing returns on existing loan portfolio of PhP1 billion;
- Expanding trade-related portfolio of the bank (LC's DA's export financing, etc.);
- Soliciting new accounts with acceptable credit rating that the bank can develop into long-term relationships;

Qualified candidates may send their resumes together with a 2x2 photo to:

Human Resources Management Division
Ortigas Center P.O. Box No. 13914
Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1605

Philippine TIPS

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Philippine Tuberculosis Inquiries for the Private Sector (Philippine TIPS), a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under USAID Contract Number 482-C-00-02-00031 and implemented by a consortium led by Chemometrics International Inc., is in need of expert in the following positions:

1. NETWORK DIRECTOR AND MANAGER

- At least 5 years relevant experience in managing health programs
 - Experience either education in tuberculosis management
 - Understanding of and familiarity with the private sector, particularly the single practice physicians
 - Experience in implementing health training programs
 - IAO, PhD in public health, management or epidemiology, or equivalent training
- Duration of assignment: January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort: 6 months
Type of assignment: Full-time consultant

2. OPERATIONS OFFICER

- Training and experience in social science and/or health research
 - Proficiency with knowledge of TB DOTS
 - Bachelor's degree in public health, management or marketing or equivalent
- Duration of assignment: January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort: 6 months
Type of assignment: Full-time consultant

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING OFFICER

- Training and experience in communications or marketing
 - Proficiency with knowledge of TB DOTS
 - Bachelor's degree in communications, advertising or marketing, or equivalent
- Duration of assignment: January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort: 6 months
Type of assignment: Full-time consultant

4. FIELD MANAGER (For Nigan and Dumaguete)

- At least 5 years relevant experience in program management, particularly in managing health and/or communication programs
 - Experience implementing health training programs
 - Understanding and familiarity with the private sector, particularly the single practice physicians
 - Bachelor's degree in communications, public health, management or marketing, or the equivalent
- Duration of assignment: January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort: 6 months
Type of assignment: Full-time consultant

Qualified applicants are requested to send their expression of interest together with their resume indicating contact numbers to phil_tips@philips.com on or before January 7, 2005

**URGENTLY NEEDED
Experienced KEY ANIMATOR**

- Japanese / Western Style Welcome
 - Inexperienced need not apply
 - Applicants shall be entertained by appointment basis only
 - Request for interview appointment is up to January 8, 2005
 - Bring Resume and work sample
- #2403 A. Aquino cor. F. Torres, Makati, Manila
Tels. 400-0135, 536-9102 Look for Akira

**PEARL GARDEN HOTEL IN "PERSISTENT PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE
IN SERVICE AND ACCOMMODATION" NEEDS RESULT ORIENTED PEOPLE
TO JOIN OUR "DREAM TEAM".**

SALES EXECUTIVE

- Male/Female, 24-28 years old, energetic, pleasing personality, self-motivated, excellent interpersonal relationship, good communication skills, computer literate-Fidelo system is an advantage
- Valid existing hotel corporate, travel and trade and government accounts is an advantage
- Preferably BS Marketing, Business Administration or Mass Communication graduates
- Good remuneration package with commissions for the qualified prospective

NIGHT/INCOME AUDITOR

- Male, with experience in hotel night income auditing and management reporting and well versed in Fidelo System
- Will be reporting at night time and will also act as Night Duty Officer
- Management oriented, trustworthy, honest and dependable
- BSBA Accounting Major is an advantage or its equivalent in experience

COST CLERK

- Male, at least 24-30 years old, with experience in food and beverage costing, accounting and stockkeeping procedures
- Graduate of BSBA major in Accounting is an advantage

Applicants are requested to send their resume with 2"x2" photo at Pearl Garden Hotel HR/Personal Dept., #1700 M. Adriano St., corner General Malar St., Makati, Metro Manila.



THE CHANNEL GROUP

Our company is a well established local leader in providing Information Technology based Business Solutions and True Nationwide Maintenance and Support Services. We are growing steadily to meet the demands of our customers and our target markets. As such we are in need of aggressive individuals who can grow together with us. Currently, we are seeking candidates for the following positions:

Client Executives

- Responsibilities:**
 - To develop new accounts, retain and service existing accounts
 - Good business acumen & ability to build professional relationship with people at all levels
 - Resourceful in lead generation
 - Able to offer total solution to meet customers' needs
- Requirements:**
 - Preferably with at least 1 year of direct sales experience in IT.
 - Experience in solution selling is a plus factor
 - Pleasant, motivated, organized self-starter with good written, communication, presentation skills
 - Aggressive, excellent interpersonal skills, target driven and customer oriented

Software Developers (Junior and Senior)

- Male or female with at least 1 to 2 years working experience building programs written in either C/C++ and/or Visual Basic
- Must have good verbal and written skills in English

Software Development Team Lead

- Male or female with at least 3 to 5 years working experience in a software development group
- Must have at least 1 to 2 years experience in developing applications written in C/C++ or Visual Basic with database integration (SQL Server, Oracle or PostgreSQL)
- Must have experience in leading a software development team
- Must have good verbal and written skills in English

Software Development Project Manager

- Male or female with at least 5 years working experience in a software development group
- Must have 1 to 2 years Project Management experience in software product development
- Must be knowledgeable in implementing CMM SEI processes
- Having PMP certification is an advantage
- Must have good verbal and written skills in English

Interested parties should submit their resume together with a recent 2x2 picture to:

Ms. Mylene C. Lorebo
Suite 218, The Atrium of Makati
Makati Avenue, Makati City
or via e-mail to mclorebo@channelgroup.net



LAMOIYAN CORPORATION

We are a domestic manufacturer of personal and household care products. In line with our expansion, we **urgently** seek for dynamic individuals to fill the following positions:

Brand Assistants

Male/Female: 22-25 years old, graduate of four year Marketing Course; excellent leadership, communication and interpersonal skills; creative, innovative, has skills in business analysis and Project management, good time management.

Account/Distributor Specialist

Male/Female: 23-29 years old graduate of any four year course, excellent communication skills, good PR, honest, self-motivated, responsible, a least one year experience as Account Specialist/Distributor Specialist/booking salesmen preferably for consumer products, willing to travel, physically fit for the position

Production Pharmacist

Male/Female: 23-29 years old, licensed, has excellent leadership and interpersonal skills; goal and people oriented, responsible, honest, able to work with less supervision; willing to work in shifts

Interested applicants may send their resume to:
Km. 15 West Service Road, South Superhighway Parañaque City, 1700

**A progressive company is in immediate need of
dynamic people to occupy the following positions:**

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

- Business course graduate, computer literate
- Single, career oriented, matured, organized, efficient
- With excellent command of oral and written English
- Able to work under pressure with minimum supervision

CIVIL ENGINEER / ARCHITECT

- Male, not more than 30 years old, computer literate
- With at least 3 years experience in hor./vert. devt.

Interested applicants are requested to come personally with their comprehensive resume with 2x2 picture and transcript or records

Monday to Friday 9:00AM to 5:00PM
Suite 2203B, 22/F, PSE Center-East Tower
Ortigas Center, Pasig City



THE HERITAGE HOTEL, MANILA, is managed by the Singapore-based Millenium & Copthorne International Limited, ranked as Asia's largest hotel group. Its London-based subsidiary Millenium and Copthorne Hotels, plc has under its hotel division, a stable of 91 hotels in 17 countries.

Dynamic and dedicated individuals meeting the qualification below are invited to apply.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

- Job Description**
 - Reporting directly to the General Manager (GM) of GRAND PLAZA HOTEL CORPORATION, owning Company of The Heritage Hotel Manila
 - Handles all confidential matters of the GM.
 - Handles travel plans and expatriate immigration matters for the Company.

- Job Qualification**
 - Bachelor's degree holders of any 4-year course with excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
 - Previous experience in secretary work.
 - Must be at least 25 years old with pleasant personality.
 - Must display self-motivation, initiative, leadership skill and able to do follow up.
 - Excellent planning and organizing skills.

Interested applicants are invited to send their resume complete with relevant particulars, current and expected salary, together with a recent passport-size photograph not later than Dec. 31, 2004 to the following address:

MR. YAM KIT SUNG
General Manager
Grand Plaza Hotel Corporation
10th Floor, The Heritage Hotel Manila
Rusoa Boulevard cor. EDSA Ext.
Pasay City



WISAE
www.jobmarketonline.com



John Clements
Consultants, Inc.

Our client is the world's leading provider of transportation services. To support their Philippine operations, they are looking for a top caliber candidate to occupy this vital role.

INTERNAL LEGAL COUNSEL

Keyword: <ILC>

Responsible for the day-to-day legal operations of the company, the best-fit candidate should be able to present the following credentials:

- Bar Passer, with 2-4 years of experience in Labor and Maritime Legal as well as P & I claims
- Expert in the legal system & substantive procedural law
- With background or knowledge in local and international maritime laws
- Proficient in English, both oral & written;
- Highly analytical and with strong leadership skills

An attractive remuneration package awaits the chosen candidate. Aspirants may forward their resumes indicating the keyword in it and in the e-mail subject line, to the address below or send SMS by typing Profile(space)<keyword> (space) <name, cellphone & landline numbers and send to 700JOBS (700-5627). FOR SMART USERS ONLY

**Professional Staffers**

A Division of John Clements Consultants

Level 12B, LKG Tower, 6801 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Telephone: (+63 2) 884-1227, 884-1169, 884-1418, 884-1168

Look for Noemi Ebarle

E-mail Address: noemi.ebarle@johncllements.com
visit: www.johncllements.com

IDS LogisticsA Member of the
Li & Fung Group**IDS LOGISTICS (PHILIPPINES), INC.**

IDS Logistics (Philippines), Inc. is a member of the Li & Fung Group, the premier Pan-Asian provider of supply chain services specializing in manufacturing, logistics and marketing.

As a leading provider of third-party logistics services across Asia and in the Philippines, IDS Logistics operates an extensive network of Distribution Centers, Customer Service Centers and Depots in major locations across the country.

We pride ourselves in having a diverse team of committed, multi-skilled and experienced staff who share a passion for excellence in providing logistics services to customers. We are continuing to build and grow our partnerships with clients, most of them leading multinational companies in their respective sectors. As such, there is a need to recruit new members to join our team and to grow with us.

At this time, we seek qualified individuals for the following key positions in our organization:

WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS MANAGER

Assumes responsibility for directing the over-all operations of a Distribution Center for fast-moving consumer goods, with high levels of volume for daily inbound and outbound transactions.

- University degree in Engineering, preferably Industrial or Mechanical.
- 3 years managerial experience gained from manufacturing or distribution sector, in the fast-moving consumer goods or automotive industry
- Excellent track record in logistics and operations management.
- Adept in modern business solutions and systems, particularly in warehouse operations & inventory management.

TRANSPORTATION MANAGER

Will oversee the operations of the Transportation Management Group and will be responsible for the growth of this business unit.

- University degree in Engineering or other related course.
- 3 years managerial experience in a freight management-related role.
- Adept with transportation management systems.

Interested parties who meet the above qualifications are requested to submit their comprehensive resume to:

Human Resource Department
IDS Logistics (Philippines) Inc.
No. 29 Industria Street, Bagumbayan, Quezon City
Email: logistics_recruitment@idsgroup.com Fax Nos: 687-3630

ONLY CANDIDATES WHO MEET THE ABOVE QUALIFICATIONS
WILL BE CALLED FOR INTERVIEW

CLOSING DATE FOR ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS IS
ON JANUARY 3, 2005.

Do you want to build a career?

A medium-sized commercial bank is in need of a dynamic, self-driven individual for the position of

CTS OFFICER

Successful applicant will be in charge of the CTS unit responsible primarily for operations. The rank shall range from Senior Manager to Assistant Vice President depending on the candidate's qualifications.

Candidates must have at least 2-3 years experience in CTS operations and preferably with marketing capability to be able to expand the existing portfolio.

Qualified candidates may send their resumes together with a 2x2 photo to:

Human Resources
Management Division
Ortigas Center, P.O. Box No. 13914
Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1605

DAILY E-NEWSPAPER NEEDS**FULL-TIME WRITER / EDITOR**

- Must have news writing/editing experience
- Have high analytical, comprehension skills
- Excellent English communication, grammar skills
- Proficient in typing and PC use
- Can work evenings, with daily deadlines
- Residents of Makati City have a definite advantage

SYSTEMS & NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR

- Expert on Linux servers and PC networking
- Knowledgeable in PHP programming
- Willing to work evenings (6 days a week, including weekends)
- Can communicate in English with other IT officers and non-technical people

E-mail resumé, including expected salary range (in .txt format) to newslink@i-manila.com.ph

WANTED ENGLISH TEACHERS

Are you experienced and Quality? Are you passionate about passing on your knowledge and experience to others? We are looking for the right people to successfully teach and motivate students to learn English. The successful applicants will need to be well organized, flexible and have excellent management skills. Please send your resume and transcripts of record. For more information, please call.

SO OMOM
International School
1045 D Street, 2005 Emerald Ave Ortigas Center
Tel: 632-2088 Fax: 632-0670

SANGRETECH ASIA BIOMEDICAL CORPORATION

A corporation based at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center Muntinlupa City is in need of the following:

PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE VII**Requirements:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Biology/Life Sciences or equivalent with 1 to 3 years of related experience
- Experience with lab equipment, mammalian cell culture, sterile techniques, computers and intermediate mathematical skills.
- Ability to assemble, disassemble, operate and understand complex equipment per standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Ability to understand, apply, and evaluate basic chemistry, biology and physical principles as appropriate for the position.
- Skill in handling multiple responsibilities, tasks and projects simultaneously including ability to shift priorities.
- Excellent communication skills and a good command of the English language.
- Ability and motivation to learn and perform new techniques in cellular and molecular biology according to SOP
- Experience in flow cytometry is desirable

Job Descriptions:

Under general supervision, employees will perform:

- Manufacturing processes according to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Specific hands on operation responsibilities include:
 - operating new complex critical processing equipment
 - immunology and cell culture procedures
 - preparing manufacturing batch records
 - preparing required materials
 - setting-up, cleaning and sanitizing production area
 - other procedures as assigned
- Quality control (QC) procedures according to SOPs. Specific responsibilities include:
 - performing QC assays which include flow cytometry, microscopy, and other assays as needed
 - producing assay reports
 - monitoring critical processes
 - executing routine validation protocols
 - other procedures as assigned
- General administrative duties as assigned

Qualified applicants may be posted abroad.

Interested applicants are requested to mail their bio-data with latest photo and transcript of records to:

Sangretech Asia Biomedical Corporation
c/o Laurel Law Offices
15th Floor, JMT Corporate Condominium
Ortigas Center Pasig City
Tel. Nos. 634-27-11 up to 19
0917-8081880

A PROGRESSIVE AND DYNAMIC COMPANY URGENTLY NEEDS THE FOLLOWING:**UNIT ACCOUNTANT (CODE: CA)**

- Male/Female
- Must be a Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Minimum of (3) years experience in all facets of accounting procedures
- Well versed in all aspects of accounting documents, methods, procedures and government reporting requirements
- Efficient with pertinent computer software & applications
- Excellent communication & leadership skills
- With Good Moral Character & can work under pressure

IN. ACCOUNTANTS (CODE: INA)

- Female - 21 to 27 years of age
- New graduates of Accountancy
- Above-average oral & written communication skills
- Can work with minimum supervision
- Computer Literate
- Detail Oriented

CREDIT AND COLLECTION OFFICER (CODE: CCO)

- Male / Female 21 to 27 years of age
- College Graduate, preferably with a degree in Accountancy, Finance, Business Administration, Management or Marketing
- Computer Literate
- Previous experience gained from collection agencies or similar industries will be an advantage
- Detail Oriented
- Willing to do field work

HR OFFICER (CODE: HNO)

- A Degree in Behavioral Science, Psychology or Industrial Relations
- Minimum of (3) years experience (gained from the Manpower Service Industry would be an advantage)
- Thorough working knowledge of all aspects of HR functions
- Detail Oriented & Results Oriented
- Computer Literate
- Excellent oral & Written Communication Skills

Please send your comprehensive resume to:
(Please indicate code on the envelope)

P.O. Box 154
C/o Philippine Daily Inquirer
5th Floor Bldg. 8 SM-Megamall, EDSA
Mandaluyong City

ODA-funded project seeks**Project Director**

with strong project development and local governance background

Job Description

The Project Director shall:

- ✓ be responsible for over-all management of a program of skills transfer training and advice on project development and management for local government units and local institutions.
- ✓ market the project services to qualified LGUs, line agencies, training institutions and other potential partners.
- ✓ manage, coordinate and administer Project funds to achieve Project goals and objectives.
- ✓ report directly to the NEDA Regional Director in Caraga and the Donor's Department Program Manager

Qualifications

- ✓ Minimum of seven years experience in designing and implementing training programs for LGUs particularly in project identification, feasibility study preparation, project financing, project prioritization. Direct involvement in social marketing for public services. Experience with an international organization an advantage. Knowledge of government procurement system and auditing/accounting rules and regulations an asset.
- ✓ Graduate of MBA, MPA, MAEcon or related field
- ✓ Excellent communication skills both written and oral
- ✓ Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to gender and development
- ✓ Willing to be assigned in Caraga for the next three years

Send your application letter with resumé and photo on or before Monday January 10, 2005 to

The Regional Director
NEDA Caraga Regional Office
NEDA Tia Bldg., J. Rosales Avenue
Butuan City
Email: neda13@bayandil.com or
neda13caraga@yahoo.com

SEND YOUR RESUMES INSTANTLY

visit us at
www.jobmarketonline.com

**CYBERSOFT**
DATA NETWORKS, INC.**URGENT HIRING!!!
DATA ENCODERS**

- ✓ Single. At least College Level
- ✓ Must be computer literate
- ✓ Excellent typing speed (at least 40 wpm with 99% accuracy)
- ✓ Related working experiences is an advantage
- ✓ Willing to comply with shifting schedules
- ✓ Must be available to work immediately

Interested Applicants may submit personally their comprehensive resume with recent picture to:

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT
5/F Pacific Corporate Center,
131 West Avenue, Quezon City

NURSES FOR NEW ZEALAND

Reliable Recruitment Corporation (POEA License No. 290LB-052802-R)
In cooperation with Arcea Nursing International Limited Accred. No. 73589

Urgently needs 100 Registered Nurses to work in NEW ZEALAND. At least 2 years solid working experience in a Hospital.

- 12 months contract (renewable)
- Salary rate at par with current NZ nurses
- Irresistible benefits
- Deployment as soon as possible
- At least 6 months experience in any of the following: ICU, CCU, PICU, SCBU, NICU, OR, ED, MED/SURG, THEATRE.

***HOLDERS OF NEW ZEALAND, UNITED KINGDOM (UKCC), AUSTRALIAN OR IRELAND NURSING REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE EMPLOYED IMMEDIATELY

PASSERS OF IELTS (ACADEMIC) RESULT, SPEAKING & WRITING, 7.0 AND WITH OVERALL BAND OF 7.0 OR ABOVE IS AN ADVANTAGE***

Passers of CGFNS, TOEFL, TSE and TWE are exempted from IELTS.

For Professional and Personal Advancement, New Zealand is for you!!!

Please submit detailed resumé to:



RELIABLE RECRUITMENT CORPORATION
1168 Grey St. Manila
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Interview conducted DAILY

MAG-INGAT SAILLEAL RECRUITER

The world of work according to Dana

By Dana MVC
Contributor

Chapter 3 Office Bliss

UP, up and away from the branch, at long last, I found myself in a zone of peace and coolness. Welcome to the comfortable and most elegant areas in the building—the main office floors.

At the 10th floor, a cozy cubicle at a corner waited for me. There, stacks of papers, folders, files, pens, rings of keys, two telephones, a computer, printer and filled-up cabinets seemed to say, "Let's get down to work." I wondered what was in store for me.

Mr. A., was the savior, genteel-mannered SVP who pulled me out from the teller's counter and brought me into this quiet, classy part of the workplace. Everybody in the area was just as busy as the staff from the branch, but here the noises were more of hums, buffering you from the pressure. I liked that.

Mr. A. told me how I would fill up three posts—one of which was to replace his secretary, J. Uneasily, I was introduced face to face, to this garrulous, carefree girl. I thought I would be her adversary but instead I became her friend. Although I never did understand the need why I had to replace her, (when she had been with company much longer than I), J. never showed resentment towards me. And that's all that matters.

Later in my career, people like her would be rare to know.

The next two persons I was introduced to, were heaven sent. They were Mr. A's administrative and credit officers, but I knew them more as his advisors. He trusted them with his life and I was so touched to be in the company of these two good persons in our division. They protected me from the ruthlessness of some other people who in a few days would show up. Not once did they fail in their ethics and professionalism. I felt blessed to be surrounded by their good spirits.

No wonder I was in "office bliss." I felt I had checked in some luxury hotel where everyone was mostly spruced up, where I could look out the window, stop for a moment and savor viewing the sights of other modern office buildings and coffee shops that straddle the city street, and where I could go up the penthouse floor, play the grand piano and sip on a 300-peso iced tea while I waited for my boss to sign papers in the executive room.

Soon, however, my stay in the executive department became an exhausting experience. Like a super waitress, I was "serving food all day." Midday for me was 5 p.m. By that time, I still had to fill up logbooks more than all my past diaries combined, receive as many phone calls as I can, arrange late afternoon meetings, summarize all sorts of money-related data and performance re-



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY MISTADES

ports coming from 16 branches citywide, and then spend one and a half hours more safekeeping memos, supplies, and ring-bound records. Frequently, I was home by 9 p.m.

One day, I sneaked off to visit the other regal floors for some fresh in-house air. I landed on the 20th floor, the Corporate Communications Department and saw the dummies, layouting desks and Adobe Suite programs in their computers. I had to be transferred here.

At my performance rating interview, I didn't miss to tell Mr. A. how I was actively involved in writing for a publication in school, and that I was the only student in our batch who spent practicum as a trainee reporter at a local broadsheet newspaper. As kind and dis-

cerning as he always was, he knew right away what I meant. He promised that on my sixth month, he would recommend my transfer to the corporate communications department. I thought life couldn't possibly be this perfect ... but hey, why not?

The sixth month came and our department had a closed-door meeting. I was touched by Mr. A.'s gesture to congratulate me as a regular employee of the bank. I was totally focused on my transfer, which was promised to me. After the meeting, Mr. A. gave me my regularization paper and confessed that my transfer would be postponed until such time that a vacancy in the corporate communications department would arise. My heart dropped. I believed it would take a long time before

such a vacancy would happen. The following day, I gave Mr. A. a letter. It was my resignation.

Chapter 4 New Jobs

Finding a new job wasn't so hard. I was lucky. I was already in a new company in less than two weeks, although deep down I knew that I did not belong to this company involved in gaming and entertainment. Yet, I remained excited about the unexpected. My pay was a little bit higher. In this company, there was a sense of mystery in the air, which was quite intriguing.

I was designated as a group executive assistant, higher level in creative work output than my former post in the bank. Despite having to routinely serve coffee everyday to my boss along with other unavoidable secretarial duties, I appreciated how frequently he would heed my creative voice and expose me to a lot of production-related activities.

Sadly, our division was dissolved and we were moved to a sister company. Though I was excited to be moved to the Marketing Department, my hopes of achieving a sensible career path were dashed when I was given the job of assistant to a notorious Marketing VP. He saw me merely as a filer of papers and coffee-maker. I resigned after two months.

Days after, I got a new job as a writer. Yup, quite a surprising leap. But, I found out that truly

getting what you want could never be easy. I had merely transferred from one disorganized company to the next. There were only eight of us in the company, including the president and VP. Every day, I sat stiffly before a computer typing compositions that wouldn't go anywhere. I think the president was hoping to assign me to write for a sensible project sometime in the future but until such time, I had to look busy scribbling on a weird assignment. It was certainly an aimless project.

My colleagues, however, were wacky, young computer programmers. They were my friends—the only motivation left for me to report to the office each day. Weeks went by and my job function was getting more and more unsatisfying. While waiting for that "sensible future project," I bought oatmeal cookies for my boss and checked the whereabouts of his two children during the day. I also picked up concert tickets for his family one terrible rainy day. Everything was an abominable disaster. Slowly, I was beginning to see myself as a failure ... and the only victory I could have was ... to resign. And so again, I did.

This time, I brought along my friends with me. The boss cried when we all left. Perhaps, because he was compelled to return all our unpaid withholding and social security taxes that he never remitted.

Why work for a call center?

From page P7

commuting and its attendant risks to one's life and property.

Work schedules may not free agents on Saturdays and Sundays to enable them to have interactions with family and friends. It may entail working on holidays such as Christmas, New Year and the Holy Week, which are impor-

tant events for Filipino Christians.

Some agents claim that the job can become routine and mechanical, and not intellectually stimulating enough. Meeting the sales quota is also frustrating for agents with no business orientation and have low achievement drive.

Career path

If the CSR finds that there is a fit

between his or her interests, personality, abilities, skills and potentials, on one hand, and the nature and requirements of the job, on the other, then he or she decides to build a career in customer service and in marketing and sales.

If an agent's performance is admirable, he gets recognition by

being promoted a step higher to that of an escalation agent who is tasked with handling difficult customers. This is a stepping stone to being a team leader. The escalation agent handles customers who usually demand to talk to the supervisor or manager. He or she takes the place of the team leader and coaches new agents and

those having problems handling difficult customers.

The management path consists of promotion to positions involving more and higher responsibilities and accountabilities with corresponding increase in compensation and benefits. Higher positions include that of being team leader or shift leader,

then shift manager and later, operations manager of one account.

(Ms Santamaria is the president of Career Systems, Inc., a leading provider of a wide array of career development training programs and consulting services in the Philippines. Send feedback to carsys@qinet.net.)

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Marketing expert helps establish center for music

By Candy G. Villanueva
Contributor

GWEN Albarracin is skilled in stage directing, has over 20 years experience in marketing and has the Pope John XXIII Award for Civic Leadership on her shelf. Arts and management stand out in her impressive and extensive profile but how does human resources fit into the picture? Albarracin is executive vice president of Center for Pop Philippines and handles strategic management of the human resources and administration division.

The Center for Pop Music Philippines, Inc. (CPMP) is the country's first and largest training school that specializes in voice and stage performance development. It boasts of many singing stars as its graduates including Roselle Nava, Dessa, Geneva Cruz, Sarah Geronimo, Njoy Volante, King, Nina and Jimmy Bondoc. Running this highly respected musical institution is chief executive officer Butch Albarracin, who founded the company. Behind the CEO is the strong support of his wife, Gwen Albarracin who makes sure the company is run by service-oriented and talented people to deliver top caliber programs to aspiring musicians.

Marketing to music

With 18 branches plus 20 extension classes in schools all over Metro Manila, the music center started in the owner's garage. Often, the cars had to be brought out to the street to give way for classes. The makeshift "classroom" was soon transformed into the Center for Pop Music through the passion of Butch Albarracin to develop a voice and stage per-

HR FOCUS

formance program. "Since this started as a family business, the division of responsibilities between my husband and I just fell into place based on our interest and the need at that moment. My husband was very happy and fulfilled in developing the voice and stage performance program and passing this training on to the coaches of the various branches and eventually developing a coaches' academy," says Gwen Albarracin.

While eager students belted high notes in their garage, Gwen Albarracin was honing her skills in marketing at the Magnolia Corporation where she worked her way up from product manager to senior product manager and then to group product manager. As Albarracin extended her marketing and managerial expertise to international operations for Magnolia as market planning manager, the school was steadily growing. Eventually, there was no other way to go but to develop the school in a music coaching academy.

In 1992, she decided to leave Magnolia to help her husband develop the Center for Pop Music Philippines. "At that time no one was looking into the organizational chart and preparing it for growth. So I challenged myself and I developed a passion to 'professionalize' the operations of CPMP by developing a cohesive operations system that will

encourage and facilitate exchange of ideas between managers and subordinates," recalls Albarracin.

Establishing the school

As executive vice president and chief operating officer of Center for Pop Music Philippines, Albarracin directs and controls the functions of the HRD administration division and the finance division. In other words, within the organization, she handles the people business. "Our main product is our training program and you have to have service oriented people and talented people to deliver this program to the end customer while encouraging feedback from clients. Getting this feedback is what we value most because this encourages everyone to do their best and this helps us to improve and continually reinvent ourselves."

More than the people business, she extended her scope to help establish the school further. "I also have a shared responsibility in the marketing division with my husband because we both are marketing graduates." She broadened the services of the school and opened programs for keyboard lessons, guitar lessons, stage pop dancing, ballroom dancing and visual art lessons. Using her marketing background, Albarracin developed joint programs for music appreciation and application with several schools, colleges and universities all over the country.

With Albarracin's help, the center also opened the Concert Division for upcoming singers, the Stars and Events Division that books star prod-

ucts and supplies the production requirements of events, and the Party Highlights that manages parties like debuts and weddings. She also handles Learnax, the division that handles seminars and workshops such as emceeing, hosting and show production.

Equation of success

Albarracin's goal for the company is to develop a culture of mutual support and respect. "Respect comes from knowing that each person is a unique individual and accepting this while inspiring all to give their best with the end goal of quality service and customer delight," she shares. She takes the people business seriously because she believes quality service and success stem from hiring the right people. "I love the challenge of hiring good people. People are hired because of good qualifications but they have to leave because of a bad attitude. Being a good employee is not only having the skill and intelligence that the job requires but it involves a good character and personality to work with and for people."

The marketing expert and LiaCom graduate achieves and promotes good employee relations by brushing up on her psychology subjects, attending seminars and reading books. "My goal as a professional is to keep on learning. In learning, there is humility and this helps me become a better HRD practitioner." As an HR professional, she also believes in empowerment through participative management. She makes it a point that her people are involved in planning and decision-making.



ALBARRACIN AUGUST DELA CRUZ

"When we involve our subordinates in planning, ideas develop and evolve into a great idea. This idea no longer belongs to just one person but of the team." By knowing that they are making significant contributions to the company, the people gain a valuable sense of fulfillment.

A double magna cum laude in Marketing and Psychology at St. Scholastica's College, Albarracin further enhanced her marketing background when she took units in graduate studies on International Marketing at the Boston College. She successfully fuses psychology, arts, management and marketing to come up with an equation for success. Her Mother Brigitta Corp Award for Leadership and the Pope John XXIII Award for Civic Leadership validate her equation. She was also selected as one of the Most Outstanding Coed by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. But more than the trophies and medals on her shelf, what truly defines Albarracin's success is the countless people she has helped grow into better individuals, both under the limelight and in the backstage.

Why work...

From page 8

very high EQ, IQ and technical skills to handle these stresses. Inbound agents have to give information and respond to complaints about the products and service of their clients. These irate customers are frustrated with the product or service, and ventiliate their anger on the agent who is not allowed to give any hostile remark even if the customer uses provoking and insulting language. Agents should expect to be called "stupid!" "idiot!" "BS!" and the like. They are trained how to respond to abusive language by assertively telling the customer not to use these words again, and if he or she still does, by transferring the line to their supervisor.

The agents interviewed for this article perceive American customers to be very demanding and to have the "I'm OK You, re not OK" mindset even if the problem they have with a product or service stems from their own faulty use of it.

Another source of stress for an agent is maintaining their "call handling time," i.e., the length of time they are expected to resolve a problem. In their effort to manage their call handling time, which is normally pegged at three minutes, agents are faced with the frustration of not being able to help the customer at all. Efficiency is measured in terms of using only three minutes to respond to a customer while effectiveness has to do with how satisfied the customer is with their response or solution.

A big source of difficulty for agents is the work schedule. The graveyard shift is frequently the reason there is a high turnover of call center agents. It takes a toll on the health of the agents, robs them of a normal lifestyle because they are awake when the rest of the world is sleeping, and sleeping when others are awake. Working the graveyard shift also poses the danger of

WVW/P. 6



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Save our families

By Bishop Precioso D. Cantillas, SDB, DD

THE GOSPEL narrative about Joseph, Mary and the Child Jesus—the whole family being forced to leave home and flee to Egypt because of the threat of Herod on the life of the Child—reminds me of the many families of the overseas Filipino workers (OFW) whose “life” is receiving some kind of “threat.” Both the World Conference of OFWs 2004 and the OFW Family Day, which I attended recently in Manila, highlight among many things, the woes, sufferings, and many other adverse effects of migrant labor on families. A recent study done on families and children of the OFWs confirms the irony that the family and its welfare—the very reason for the Filipinos to work abroad—becomes at the same time the very victim of labor migration, a costly price the worker has to pay. What could help to protect

our OFWs and their families against the danger of the destruction of the family?

The example of the Holy Family should inspire all families of workers particularly the OFWs to include the element of faith in the work situation. Joseph “migrated” to Egypt in obedience to God’s will made known to him by the angel, and so that the Child-Messiah would live Working abroad or even here should also be understood as our way of doing God’s will in our lives and not just as our way of earning for our needs and those of our families. Money and material things should not be the over-riding reason for our work. The awareness—that our life comes from God and what we do with it, our work, is our gift to God—will guide us in our decisions on our work and will save our families from destruction of all kinds. (E-mail the author at mfvig@skyinet.net.)

REFLECTIONS
FOR THE
WORKING SOUL

Gospel: Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled...

Feeling threatened

By Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS

TODAY’S Gospel is reminiscent of a very real situation in many workplaces: a superior who feels threatened by a bright subordinate. Herod wanted all male infants killed because of jealousy: he was afraid of being dethroned by the King of Kings.

One of the most destructive presences in the workplace is a Herod-boss who is so insecure as a superior that he wouldn’t let anyone beneath

him get the limelight lest he be consigned to the shadows. More often than not, this boss lacks competence and is motivated by less-than-noble reasons. He, most likely, uses his subordinates to glorify himself—extracting ideas from them and passing them off as his own, making them work like horses but never acknowledging their contribution, etc. He is so comfortable in his power groove that he gets threatened when he cannot subjugate somebody smart



among his “hirelings.” Afraid of change, the Herod-boss glued to the commander’s seat is one of the chief reasons a company gets stuck in mediocrity—his ego-driven hand strangles fresh concepts and stifles creativity.

What causes this kind of superior to feel threatened by upcoming brilliance? He may have been guided by high-mindedness before but soon became a slave to the power

that got into his head until he believed he could never be wrong. A leader with unquestionable competence and who is guided by the highest principles, by service instead of selfishness, is not afraid of being “unseated,” because he recognizes the truth that he, like everyone else, is but an instrument of—and for—the Highest Good. (E-mail the author at teresa_de_manila@yahoo.com)

How do you make it
through the hiring minefield?

DEAR WW: A friend in human resources recently told me about how most companies use computers to screen resumes. I had no idea that people weren’t screening resumes. What else don’t I know about the hiring process and what can I do to survive it?

Screened Out

Recently, I read about a California law where anyone could complain about your driving and DMV would hold a hearing where you could ultimately lose your license. The law was created for the concerned families of elderly drivers. However, the law was poorly written and leaves the door open for anyone to challenge your license, good reason or not.

It’s no different in the hiring process at most companies. Many different people and computers along the way can challenge your ability to do the job and end your chances of being hired. To improve your survival odds, I’ve outlined below the four hiring stages used by most companies and what you need to know to survive each. For more information, check out Ron Fry’s book, “101 Greatest Answers to Toughest Interview Questions” (Career Press, 2000).

How do you get past the computer scan of your resume? At many companies the initial screening of resumes is done by computers. That’s why it’s important to read the job announcement carefully and load up on the same keywords that are emphasized in the text. Also cut out the colored paper and fancy fonts to keep your resume scanner-friendly.

How do you survive the telephone interview? The most important thing to know about the telephone interview is that most phone interviewers are more focused on eliminat-



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAYO

WORKING
WOUNDEDBob
Rosner

ing candidates than finding great people to hire. Focus on how you meet the requirements of the job and don’t volunteer any information that could confuse or make your interviewer nervous.

How do you survive your first face-to-face interview? Congratulations. You’ve actually got a human being sitting across the table from you. Since they’re probably in human resources, chances are that they’ll be mainly focused on how you meet the job’s qualifications. It’s fine to ask them general questions about the company and the job, but remember this is probably not the most knowledgeable person to grill about the job’s day-to-day realities.

How do you get the person who you’ll actually be working for to pick you? Chances are that the manager who will actually hire you is more concerned about your attitude and how you’ll fit in than how you fit each of the job’s qual-

ifications. So remember at this stage that your intangibles are often as important as your resume and experience. Also, most managers are more pressed for time than the human resources people that you’ve been talking to up until now. Get a feel for how rushed the manager is and adjust the length of your answers accordingly.

Have a specific plan for each stage of the hiring process and you’ll be safe in the drivers’ seat.

Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com online ballot. What are the most important to a company hiring a new employee?

- Writing skills, 1.1 percent
- Organizational skills, 7.4 percent
- Leadership skills, 9.4 percent
- Interpersonal skills, 37.6 percent
- Problem solving skills, 44.2 percent

(Mr. Rosner, an internationally syndicated columnist, author and speaker, is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.)

Why work for a call center?

By Josie O. Santamaria

(Last Dec. 12, 2004, the column of Ms. Santamaria, in response to a letter, tackled call centers, the job of customer service representatives or CSRs and the industry’s recruitment process. The following is a continuation of the column.)

THE TRAINING given to newly hired customer service representatives is designed to make the new agent competent and self-confident in managing and controlling inbound and outbound calls to and from English-speaking Americans living in the US. Inbound calls are made by Americans seeking more information or complaining about products or services they are using. Outbound calls are made by agents to a list of prospects in the US to sell the client’s product or service.

Every call that the agent makes is recorded and evaluated by a group in the company known as quality assurance, which gives feedback to the agent on his or her delivery, clarity and effectiveness or in effect, whether the calls have achieved their purpose.

Rigorous training

A newly hired agent is trained first on how to speak like a native American in terms of diction, pronunciation and accentuation, and how to listen accurately. Heavy slang is a no-no. This training is given for one week, eight hours a day.

Next, the agent is briefed on American culture and geography on the second week. Tests, both written and oral, are given to check the agent’s proficiency on this score. Then, on the third week, the agent is oriented on the product. Examples of products are credit cards, all kinds of insurance, telecommunication, utilities, websites, and services such as financial, travel and fitness. The trainees are drilled on everything about the product or service and the company selling these.

Telemarketers, on the other hand, are given additional training on selling skills i.e., how to do a sales pitch and close a sale within a three-minute time frame. Inbound agents are especially trained how to handle different kinds of irate customers with different levels of agitation.

This rigorous training benefits the newly recruited agents in the following ways: they learn life skills (communication—speaking and listening, handling conflict) as well as selling skills, which can be useful in other jobs as well. They also gain self-confidence. And while learning, the trainees get full pay during the training period.

Other requirements

In addition to the above knowledge and skills, an agent is also expected to be proficient in basic computer programs like

ASK YOUR
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word processing, e-mail and chatting, and the Internet. The agent must document every call made and received so the typing speed must be at least 25 words per minute. The agent must also be good in multitasking, i.e. the readiness and ability to do different tasks at the same time such as, talking, listening, analyzing and typing. Usually, there are at least three computer software programs simultaneously being used by an agent while talking to a customer.

The following personality traits are a “must” for a customer service agent. High frustration tolerance, big dose of patience, ability not to take “cuss” words personally, high energy level, mental alertness, high sense of urgency, precision and attention to details, and high achievement drive, which refers to one’s desire to face challenges and to keep improving one’s skills in solving problems.

To be happy and successful as a customer service representative requires three kinds of orientation: people, service and business. To be a people-oriented person means that you like being with and talking to people. Being a service-oriented person means that you like helping people resolve their concerns, solve their problems and keep them happy. To be business-oriented means that you value satisfied and happy customers as your long-term business partners who keep coming back and refer others to your company.

Challenges and benefits

With all these challenges, why should one work as a customer service representative in a call center? For one, there are many job vacancies in call centers. If you meet the qualifications and basic requirements, and pass the various tests, both theoretical and practical, you can easily find a job. Second, the call center provides training and development that can help you develop competence and self-confidence. The knowledge and skills you acquire will serve you throughout your working life and career. In addition, the ability to manage stress, tolerate frustration and help difficult customers with their needs, concerns, problems can develop your personality and character and enhance your emotional quotient (EQ) especially in the area of management of your emotions, sensitivity to the feelings and needs of other people, and providing win-win solutions.

Third, the pay is good. Where

else can a college graduate as a first job, earn from a low of P12,000 to a high of P15,000 per month? Agents earn more if they work in the graveyard shift, and during holidays in the Philippines. Employees enjoy medical and life insurance, paid time off and leaves (sick, vacation, etc.). Also, agents get free meals and transportation allowance.

An intrinsic source of satisfaction is the knowledge that they are helping people, and this includes the irate customers, with their problems. The agents can also experience a sense of fulfillment for doing a good job, such as satisfying a customer’s needs and receiving a “pat on the back” from the customer, from their team leader and from the quality assurance people who monitor all calls.

Another plus factor in working at a call center is that agents work with people of their own age, i.e., young people between 20 to 30 years of age. Even employees who are older in years are youthful, energetic and helpful to younger employees. There are also activities that bring employees together for fun such as out-of-town trips, company-paid buffet lunch in a good restaurant, and other activities that appeal to young people. Also, call centers have no dress codes, so employees can wear any attire to work that is comfortable to them.

Work environment

The offices of call centers are usually big, modern, equipped with state-of-the-art computer and telecommunications equipment and well-maintained to provide comfort and relaxation to a big number of employees. At the same time, the color of the walls and ceilings are bright enough to stimulate the mind and keep it alert.

Most call centers have clients providing 24-hour service for their customers who can call a 1-800 toll-free number at any time. This means there are at least three shifts of agents. The shifts are broken into the morning shift and the graveyard shift. Newly recruited agents are always given the graveyard shift of 11 or 12 p.m. to 8 or 9 a.m. This involves a major adjustment of their body clocks and one of the major reasons for fast turnover of agents.

An eight-hour shift includes lunch and coffee breaks. A five-day workweek is observed but days off do not necessarily mean a Saturday and a Sunday. The schedule given to an agent, and which is often non-negotiable, will indicate his or her days off.

Problems and concerns

Providing customer service to people you don’t interact with face-to-face but only through voice is stressful, enough to dealing with those who shout and use foul language can be infuriating. An agent needs to have a

WHY?

What’s inside

HR Focus: Gwen Albarracin of Center for Pop Music
p. 7



The world of work according to Dana
p. 6



INQUIRER



Graphics by STEPH BRAVO

Compiled by the SIM Staff

THEY came, they spoke, they sought to conquer. All across the planet, the words—sibilant, sharp, sanctified, spiteful, sympathetic and strange—bounced from one person to another and another, until we all caught the same sentences, almost breathing the same breath. And the ongoing conversation, of shock and awe, of personality and issue, of the elements and of man, were all about how troubled the world seemed, and we heard it all.

Death came in many guises, laying countless little lives low and lifting up some famous ones. There was what seemed at the time a battle over the country, a contest that divided the nation. Then came forces of nature and man, of fame and fortune, all the way to the end of the year, where fire snuffed out an oh-so-young life, and time asked us all to bid farewell to Da King. Here, with SIM's selection of the best quotes of the year, join us as we laugh, mourn, rage and, most of all, listen:

Ruel S. De Vera

Laugh, cry, mourn and rage
as we remember the year's
best quotes

The Spoken World

by The SIM Staff
Get ready to laugh, cry and remember, as
SIM brings you the best quotes of 2005



LOREN Legarda

BONG Revilla

MIRIAM Defensor-Santiago

JUAN Ponce Enrile

JANUARY

"We need leaders who will put the national interest above the personal interest and who will not steal the country blind."

—Senator Loren Legarda, accepting the offer to become Fernando Poe Jr.'s running mate in the upcoming May polls

"If we consider that, on average, five people lived in each house, we can say the death toll will reach 50,000."

—A senior Iranian Interior Ministry official, after a December 26, 2003 earthquake leveled the ancient city of Bam

"We're still hoping for a united opposition and we have one whole month to work on that. We have not given up. We can still afford to be hopeful."

—Ex-Senator Francisco "Kit" Tatad, on the rift between opposition forces after Legarda was announced as a VP bet

"For as long as you do your job well as a politician, I don't see any problem, even if you make movies as an actor."

—Actor and senatorial bet Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr., on his conviction to keep making movies even if he wins in the 2004 elections

"We respect Poe's decision to pick her as his running mate but we could not forget her role in the Estrada ouster."

—Arnold Obina of the pro-Estrada People's Alliance for Truth and Justice, on why the group is demanding a public apology before they decide to support Legarda

"Miko will do anything to make you laugh, even at his

own expense. Thank you, Miko, for making this world a better place."

—Ali Sotto, bidding farewell at the funeral of son, young actor Miko Sotto, who fell to his death from a Mandaluyong City condominium

"Although I don't agree with some of his choices, I fully respect his decision."

—Ex-Pres. Joseph Estrada, on his friend FPJ's senatorial choices

"FPJ revealed his fatal flaw. So new, so inexperienced and now so lost."

—Ex-Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago on FPJ

"Just give me tea."

—Shahrbanou Mazandarani, the 98-year-old survivor of the quake in Bam, Iran, after being pulled out of the rubble and going without food or water for eight days

"Yes, I am a Filipino."

—Fernando Poe Jr., responding to accusations that he was not a Filipino citizen and thus ineligible to run in the elections

"Walking down the aisle and seeing him."

—Lea Salonga, on the highlight of her wedding to businessman Robert Chien in Los Angeles

"To seek a seat in the Senate now would be an enterprise dictated by the terms of the times instead of other dreams."

—Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, declining an invitation from the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino to be part of its Senate slate

"While I am a close friend of Erap's, ang pagkakaalam ko (as far as I know) there are no identical DNAs."

—FPJ, saying on the campaign trail that he is no Estrada clone.

"While we are happy that the realization of the recovery of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth is at hand, we are deeply worried. We fear that the money will go instead to the campaign."

—Marie Hilao-Enriquez, chair of the Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya, on fears that the \$683 million Marcos Swiss deposits would be used to fund Macapagal-Arroyo's reelection bid

"The ministry has decided to kill all chickens in these epidemic zones."

—Vietnamese agriculture official Dau Ngoc Hao, on the order to slaughter millions of chickens in 12 regions stricken by a bird flu epidemic

"It's going to be a long journey for me. It's a dream come true."

—Ateneo forward Rich Alvarez, after having been selected the top pick in the 2004 PBA Rookie Draft

"Americans traveling to or residing in the Philippines are urged to exercise great caution and maintain heightened security awareness."

—The US State Department, renewing a warning on terrorist threats in the Philippines

"In 1965, we have Ferdinand fighting a Macapagal (President Diosdado Macapagal, who lost). Now, we have Fernando fighting another Macapagal."

—Senatorial candidate Juan Ponce Enrile, comparing FPJ to the former dictator

"We have implanted the first embryo two weeks ago."

—Fertility specialist Panaylitis Zavos, claiming he had implanted a cloned human embryo in a woman's womb

"Politicians have abused and betrayed people power."

—Manila Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas, on the nation three years after the events of EDSA II

"If I were engaged in something sub rosa or plotting political motives, it would be very absurd for me to be so careless in the manner they described."

—National Archives Director Ricardo Manapat, on allegations he fabricated documents to discredit Poe's Filipino citizenship

"We feel we are not at liberty to finally declare whether or not the respondent is a natural-born Filipino citizen."

—Comelec decision, dismissing a disqualification case against Poe

"I don't think weapons of mass destruction existed."

—American head of the Iraq Survey Group David Kay, as he quit his post

"We suspect they are really going to disqualify him before the Supreme Court. I'm warning them not to do that, lest there will be civil war, revolution or massive civil disobedience."

—Estrada, on what would happen if FPJ is barred from running

"I ask Democrats everywhere to join us so we can defeat George W. Bush

and the economy of privilege."

—American Sen. John Kerry, after winning the New Hampshire primary

"The peso is weak because of month-end corporate requirements, accompanied by all this nonsense like talk of a coup and rumors of no-elections. These political noises are unsettling the market."

—Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura, after the peso plunged to a then-new low of P56.01 to a dollar

"The message is clear. The Philippines is free from bird flu. This is our way of telling people that it's safe to eat chicken here."

—Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, while eating fried chicken at a press briefing

"He never blinked against the dictatorship, and when it was necessary to fully unite the political opposition, Doy displayed true statesmanship and set aside his own dream to be president."

—Vice President Tito Guingona, on the passing of former Vice President Salvador "Doy" Laurel on Jan. 27 in California

FEBRUARY

"It's a non-issue because it's the truth. Hindi namin ito itinatago (We're not hiding it)"

—FPJ, after publicly acknowledging that he has a son, Ronan, with actress Ana Marin

"It's not enough to be a man of the masses without a brain and not enough for a brain without a heart for the masses. A candidate must possess both, and I'm lucky to have both virtues."

—Legarda, suggesting that rival VP bet Sen. Noli de Castro lacked the smarts for the post

"I want to see their faces when they die because they did not only kill my daughters, they also raped them."

—Thelma Chiong, after the Supreme Court meted out the death penalty to six of the seven men accused of killing Chiong's two daughters

"We never get it right when we practice this, but this went to perfection."

—Mars program chief engineer Rob Manning, after the Spirit rover spacecraft successfully landed and began sending signals from the surface of the planet Mars

"If the political and economic situations in the country do not improve, I don't have a choice but to leave and live abroad. All I can think about is the welfare of my kids."

—Actor Aga Muhlach, on what would make him decide to leave behind his ca-

"Some want me out but I am a stubborn public servant and will continue to serve the Comelec."

—Commission on Elections Chair Benjamín Abalos, saying that he would not resign his post despite a survey stating that many Filipinos did not trust him

"What occurred was unintentional, completely regrettable and I apologize if you guys were offended."

—American pop star Justin Timberlake, apologizing at the Grammy Awards for the "wardrobe malfunction" that exposed Janet Jackson's breast at the halftime show for Super Bowl on Feb. 1

"I used to look up to him as 6'2" tall. Now, he is not even two inches tall."

—Alyansa ng Pag-asa presidential aspirant Raul Roco, deploring Sen. Rodolfo Blazor's defection to the administration K-4 coalition

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NEW YEAR'S EVE SPECIALS

Await the 12 midnight chime at The Richmond Hotel Lobby's Countdown Celebration with live entertainment from Joey Bautista and Girl Valencia and bubbly drinks and hors d'oeuvres overflowing from 9:30 p.m. onwards. A hearty and scrumptious dinner buffet awaits diners at the Grill. For reservations, call 638-7777.

WORTH A READ

I now reside here in Ontario, Canada with my husband and four kids. We arrived in Canada last April 2004.

I was reading the INQUIRER website and came across the article under "Pinoy Connection" ("Their Canadian Dream—or Nightmare?," SIM, 12 December 2004). I just want to say that the article is worth reading for all Filipinos, especially for those kababayans of ours who have intentions of applying as immigrants to work here in Canada.

More power to the Sunday INQUIRER.

CHITT SANTIAGO
csantiago@rogers.com

A DOG HEAVEN

Damn it, you got me teary-eyed there, that was a good one ("There Must Be A Dog Heav-

en," SIM, 5 December 2004).

Reminds me of my Bamba, my dear dog. Thanks so much. Yes, there is indeed a Dog Heaven. I salute you, Ma'am. Be safe.

vozmak@sbcglobal.net

ERRATA:

In the article "The Bee Lady from Bohol" by Congee Gomez (SIM, 19 December 2004), it was misstated that Vicky Wallace's grandparents are from Pangasinan. They are actually from Pangasinan. It was an editing mistake, and no fault of the author's. SIM regrets the error.

In the November 14 issue, the name of writer Myra Gaculas Dei Rosario ("Muscling In on A World Championship") was misspelled. SIM apologizes for the oversight.

ATTENTION CONTRIBUTORS!

SIM strives to pay our valued contributors within three weeks of publication of an article or poem. However, to facilitate preparation of your fees — and to avoid an unnecessary trip! — please give the Cashier a call at tel. no. 897-8808 local 533 to confirm if your check is ready before visiting. Many thanks and keep them coming!

A Winning Partnership

SMART Entrepreneurial Program@Pampanga



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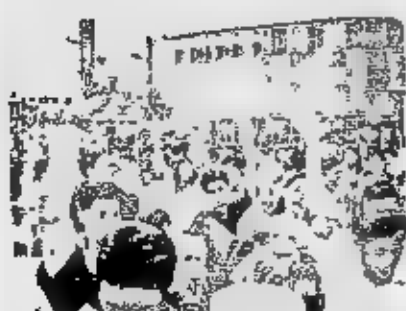
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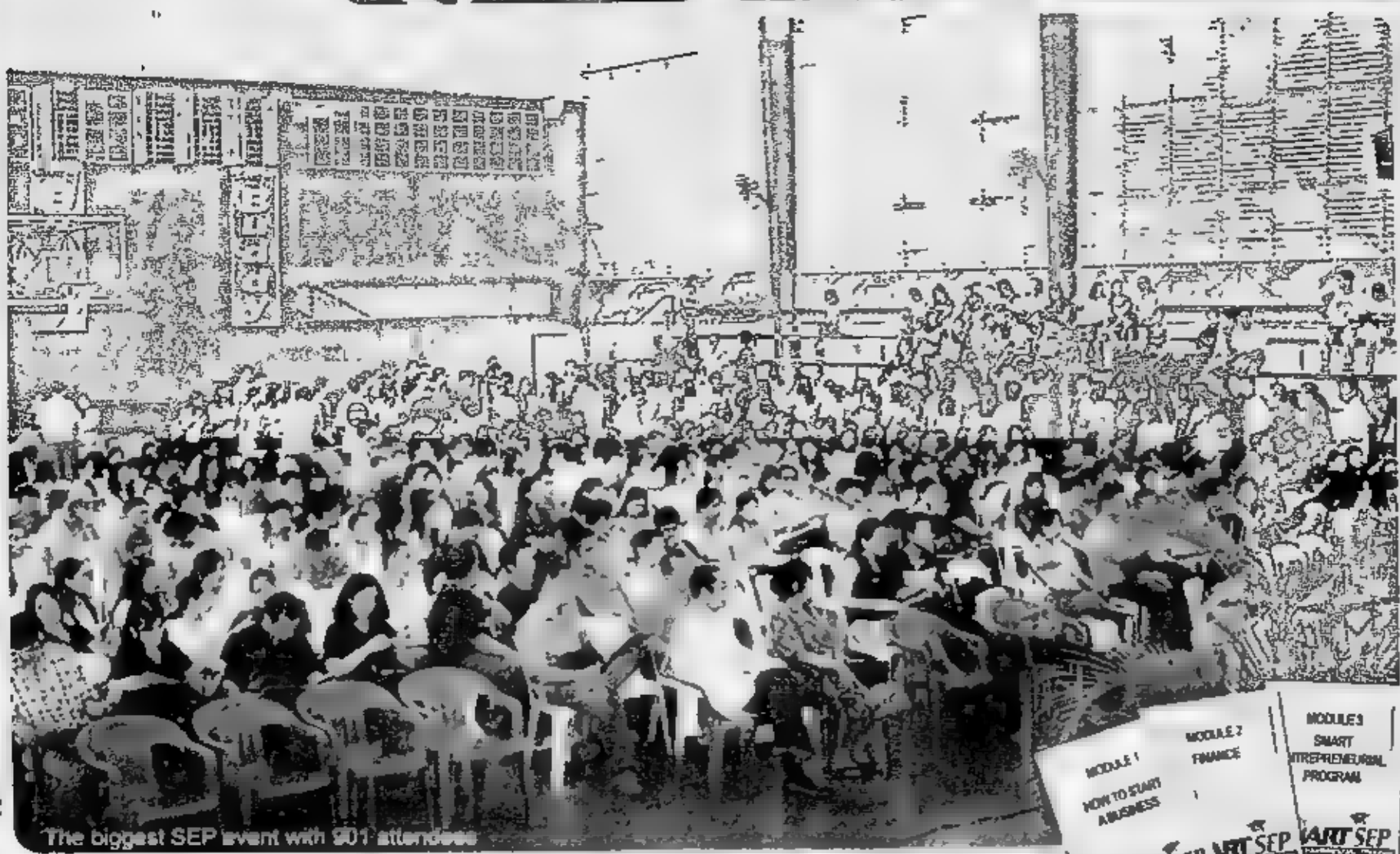
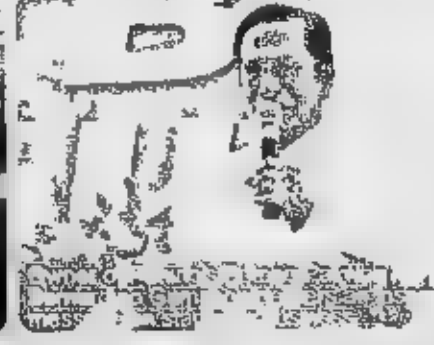
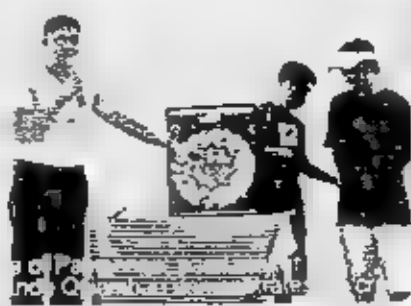
---University President Pama



A show of hands for SMART subscribers



SMART
Simply Amazing!



The biggest SEP event with 901 attendees



A crowded registration booth welcomes invited and walk-in guests



Manny on Entrepreneurship

"Businesses do transform societies. They not only shape our physical and our virtual worlds, but also create new needs, new hopes, and new dreams."

-- Manuel V. Pangilinan, PLDT and SMART Chairman

The SMART Entrepreneurial Program or SEP reaches Pampanga in its biggest event to date. 901 students from all over Pampanga and Metro Manila gathered in the Angeles Foundation University for a whole day affair that gave students and graduates alike a glimpse into the world of entrepreneurship. For University President Pama, this partnership with SMART is a win-win situation where the company and the students benefit from the initiatives of each one.

With a holding capacity of 1200 people, the school gymnasium was a good choice of venue. Expecting only 500-600 students, both the

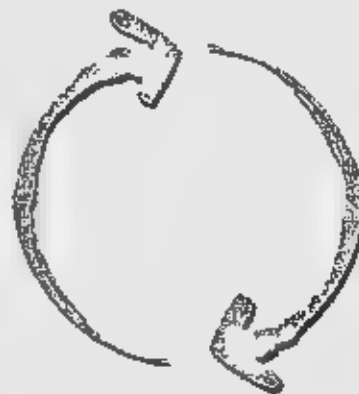
SMART organizers and faculty members were very much surprised and gladdened by the huge turnout. Out of the 901 attendees, 639 were graduates and only 262 were still studying. A text broadcast was done in preparation of the event and even then the interest of young housewives, recent graduates, and even working folks were seen via their inquiries and responses.

Crowd favorites were Mr. Butch Bartolome's talk on "How to Start A Business" and the SEP module, which presented SMART's answer on how each one can begin to become an entrepreneur. Participants were surprised at how easy it was to earn your own capital while

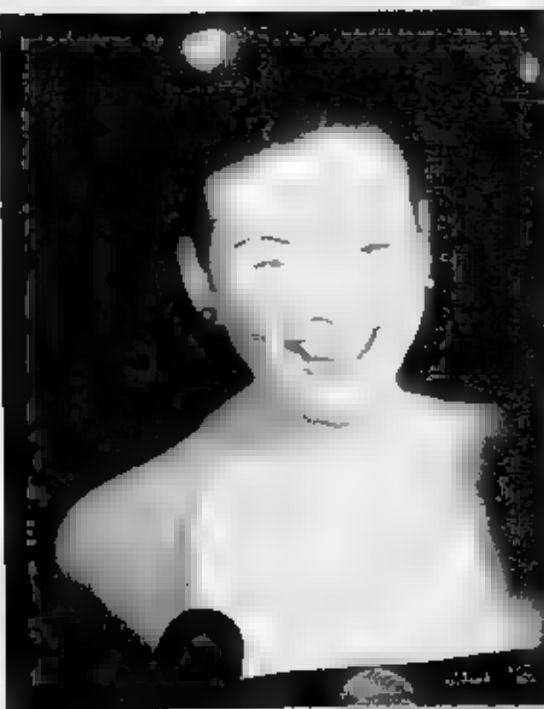
countless others were inspired to begin something of their own. For the undergrads a job fair was held after the series of talks. Here, they got to submit their resumes to companies like E-Global Voice, Cyber City, and SMART. Students like Lyndon, Zeta, and Erby are engineering students certain that SEP will help prepare them for future challenges may it be in employment or entrepreneurship.

For SEP, this mutual show of confidence in the program and in the students and schools that support them is what a winning partnership is all about.

It's not just about the innovations we bring...



It's about the opportunities we provide.



ROSANNA Roces



EDDIE Gil



FPJ



BE

Quotes ...from page 2

"Whoever said that, 'I'm calling' them liars."

—Biazon, disputing claims that he received P30 million to jump parties

"We will make the national pool a very prestigious group to belong to."

—Philippine Sports Commission Chair Eric Buhain, on the decision to cut in half the number of athletes in its payroll, from 1,000 to the "Golden 500"

"We were looking for an event to mark Valentine's Day meaningfully."

—Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, on the "Close-up Lovapalooza," where 5,122 Filipino couples kissed for 10 seconds in an attempt to break a world record

"Only a charred sculpture of an Igorot man playing the flute remains of the house. It stands by the gate. I lost all my memories in that house."

—Filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik, after his Baguio home was razed to the ground in a fire

"The present government must be replaced. We can't afford six more years of Gloria"

—Roco, on why GMA should not be reelected

"They came here on their own; they are not being paid."

—Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto III, one of FPJ's spokesmen, on the celebrities who appear at KNP rallies to endorse Poe

"Over the last four years, Joe has been hailed as the second Ramon Valera. I dare say that Joe Salazar stands on his own as a great Filipino designer"

—Designer Inno Sotto on designer Joe Salazar, who passed away Feb. 14

"The peso is being burdened by politics. Our economy remains stable."

—GMA, after the peso fell to a then all-time low of P56.36 to a dollar

"The loss of both my mom and Tito Nestor is a big blow to the entertainment industry."

—Kaye Torres, daughter of slain actress Nida Blanca, after Blanca's long-time onscreen partner Nestor de Villa, died Feb. 21 at 75

"She came from the Philippines to make it in New York. And of course, with her brains, with her determination, and also with her courage...she made it."

—Rev. Ermo Diaz, officiating the funeral mass for slain Filipino-American financial analyst Maria Pilar "Pipie" Cruz in New York

"I did not know that it was a baby when it was thrown to me."

—Pregnant Nelia Tubio, who caught two-month-old Adrian Amomas in her arms after the child was thrown by his mother to save the infant's life when SuperFerry 14 caught fire in Manila Bay

"While it pains me to do so, I'm looking for-

ward to going abroad and not let the opportunity pass."

—Medical board topnotcher Elmer Reyes Jacinto, on his plans to work as a nurse in a New York hospital

MARCH

"We did it!"

—Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Soliman, claiming responsibility for the fire that struck SuperFerry 14

"I'm so honored and relieved that the academy and the members of the academy that have supported us have seen past the trolls and the wizards and the hobbits in recognizing fantasy this year."

—Director Peter Jackson, whose movie "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" swept the Oscars with 11 wins

"I feel that she should not think of it that way. What she does on screen does not necessarily reflect her true personality."

—Pitoy Moreno, on comments made by sexy actress Juliana Palermo that she was excluded from the list of finalists for the 2004 Bb. Pilipinas because of her onscreen roles

"Finally, I was vindicated."

—FPJ, after the Supreme Court voted 8-5 that he was qualified to run in the elections

"FPJ has always said that debates are divisive."

—Sotto, as to why FPJ would not engage his opponents in a public debate

"What a beautiful person she was."

—Former President Corazon Aquino, on the passing of Time Magazine foreign correspondent emerita Sandra Burton

"I will appeal the verdict and continue to fight to clear my name. I believe in the fairness of the judicial system and remain confident that I will eventually prevail."

—American lifestyle icon Martha Stewart on her website, after she was found guilty of lying to investigators on a sale of stock

"It doesn't matter how many times you fall. What matters is how well you stand after that fall"

—Bb. Pilipinas Universe Maricar Balagtas, who won the title on her third try

"Ako pa? (Who, me?) I've been offered reimbursements of my campaign costs by someone close to FPJ, and I told them I don't deal in concessions and reimbursements."

—Senator Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, on why he could not see himself uniting with the FPJ faction

"If that is what truth requires, so be it."

—National Archives employee Remmel Talabis, asked if his job would be imperiled by his saying that the documents casting doubts on FPJ's citizenship had been doctored

"We have what we believe is the most po-

tent group of economists and planners that can be formed."

—Rep. Francis Escudero, FPJ campaign spokesman, on FPJ's 19-man economic advisory team

"I want every Filipino to watch this film because there is a promise here, there is meaning. Maybe God is trying to tell us something."

—Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, on Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ"

"We do not buy votes, we buy health care. They cannot call this politicking because it is part of our mandate, and we started this program two years ago."

—PhilHealth president Francisco Duque, defending the distribution of health insurance cards that bore GMA's image

"This is about fighting for the return to moral governance and the search for a leader who is his own person, one who is sincere and has native intelligence, one who is prepared to exercise political will to chart meaningful reforms to rebuild our nation under God."

—Vice President Teofisto Guingona, formally announcing his acceptance of FPJ's offer to become the candidate's adviser

"This sort of insensitivity to the dignity of women and their continued degradation, particularly in advertising products and services, hurts the sensibilities of the Filipina woman."

—Bishop Emilio Marquez of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines Office on Women, expressing outrage over Napoleon Brandy's "Kinse Anyos" ads

"We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid. It is in response to your collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies."

—An alleged Al Qaeda operative speaking in Arabic on a videotape, claiming responsibility for the bombings in Madrid that killed 200 people

"All told, as logic will tell us, it is inevitable to conclude that the respondent is not a stranger to the games of charlatans and impostors."

—Comelec decision declaring Eddie Gil a nuisance candidate and disqualifying him from running

"I have the capacity to campaign anywhere, even throughout the world, not only in the Philippines."

—Gil, after tearing up a copy of the decision

"This is not the first time that the Viva Hot babes violated MTRCB rules and regulations, so we finally decided to take a stand"

—Movie and Television Ratings and Classification Board chair Marissa Laguardia, suspending Hot Babe Asia Agcaoili for 20 days after the performer accidentally exposed a

breast during a variety show dance number

"Superbl"

—"American Idol" judge Simon Cowell, describing Fil-Am contestant Jasmine Trias' performance of "Inseparable"

"We have high school students who can't cope with the demand of the high school curriculum."

—Department of Education official Corazon Echano on the five-year high school "bridge program" that would add a year to the existing high school program

APRIL

"The queue is long, we will not run out of bombers."

—Abu Sayyaf's Khadaffy Janjalani, after the Superferry bombing that killed at least 100 people

"So many straight politicians are dragged into sex scandals, yet their heterosexual excesses are not questioned."

—Michael Urbano of the Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines (PROGAY), after a sex worker accused senatorial candidate John Osmeña of rape

"Life is in itself an experience, and I think I have been a survivor."

—FPJ on GMA's exhortation of the public to vote for a candidate with experience

"Ang pikon, talo. (If you lose your cool, you lose)."

—Raul Roco, on news that FPJ had lashed out at reporter Sandra Aguinaldo

"It's about time I speak out about my husband's abuses."

—Melissa Martel, who filed frustrated homicide charges against husband Robby Martel, scion of the Harrison Plaza family after he shot her in the stomach

"I am just so happy that I made it this far. The most important thing I learned from the show is to be true to myself."

—Jasmine Trias, after surviving the fourth round of the "American Idol" amateur singing competition, where fellow Fil-Am Camille Velasco was eliminated.

"Hello, idoll Good afternoon! Can you be one of my wedding sponsors?"

—Rep. Francis Escudero on the first time he ever spoke to the actor-presidential contender

"Absolutely. Tell it to the people. Tell it to the wind."

—Roco on whether he was pushing through with his presidential bid after news that he was seriously ill

"One thing is very sure: I am happy and proud to be a Filipino and will always be."

—Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Cheryl Diaz Meyer, on a trip back home to Legazpi City

"After what happened with the other show, I know I have to stop and think before talking."

—Willie Revillame, on learning his lesson af-

GRACE Padaca



WILLIE Revillame



PIA Cayetano



ARCHBISHOP Gaudencio Rosales



NJAMIN Abalos



NESTOR Sulpico



CHERYL Diaz-Meyer



TITO Sotto



RAUL Roco

ter being suspended for offensive banter on ABS-CBN's noontime show "MTB"

"Like all things, only time and God can tell when we will go."

—Rep. **Bobby Dimaporo** after the death of his father, Lanao kingpin Ali Dimaporo

"You don't need hundreds of thousands of pesos to win."

—**Leandro Catarata**, candidate for Mayor of Valencia City, Bukidnon, who campaigned with P30,000 and sacks of camote, bananas, rice and corn

"Because of this, I will be president. They have been oppressing me, and those who made the decision will be punished by God."

—Presidential wanna-be **Eddie Gil**, after the Supreme Court upheld the Comelec ruling that declared him a nuisance candidate.

"This kind of weather is perfect."

—Tenor **Andrea Bocelli**, after arriving in Manila for a one-night concert

"He died the way he wanted to—peacefully and without having to be hospitalized or attended to by a doctor... He was allergic to doctors."

—**Cecile Joaquin Yasay** on the death of her uncle, National Artist Nick Joaquin

MAY

"I hope those who are planning to cheat will change their minds once they see these people."

—Bro. **Eddie Villanueva** at a huge rally for him on Ayala Avenue

"I don't need a man to make me happy."—Actress **Judy Ann Santos**, announcing that she would have a baby at age 29 (she is 26)

"I'll go shopping till I drop."

—Golfer **Jennifer Rosales** on winning P13 million and her first LPGA title

"We have only just started to come out of a particularly bad patch, and now this."

—A **Boracay** hotel owner after news of the murder of three foreigners on the island

"I know that this would cause alarm, but the missing ballots are not enough to make or unmake a presidential candidate."

—Comelec Chair **Abalos** after 2,500 ballots were stolen from the National Printing Office

"I told him I was sorry for the humiliation suffered by the Iraqi prisoners."

—US President **George W. Bush** on what he told Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, whom he refused to sack after the incident

"If I received that much money, then I would have been able to pay all my debts."

—**Nora Aunor** on allegations that she received P6.2 million for "services rendered" to the Philippine government during the election campaign

"It's good news to the people. It's good

news to the coconut farmers."

—PCGG chair **Haydee Yorac** after the Sandiganbayan awarded to the government 27 percent of shares in San Miguel Corporation, taken from former SMC Chair Danding Cojuangco

"His countrymen should be very proud of what Pacquiao did here today."

—Manny Pacquiao's American promoter **Murad Muhammad** after the Filipino boxer's fight against Mexican champion Juan Manuel Marquez ended in a split draw

"My house was one big funeral parlor. Pity the loser. I experienced that. You feel terrible."

—Speaker **Jose de Venecia**, recalling the 1998 presidential election, when he ran and lost

"They've been at it since early this morning, offering as much as P500 per registered voter."

—**Rolando Lim**, a voter in Lamitan, Basilan, on rampant vote-buying during the elections

"For now, a sober effort to get the country going should be the agenda of every Filipino."

—**Roco**, after becoming the first candidate to concede to GMA

"Since I had to encounter a lot of trials and obstacles, I became a stronger person."

—Ma. **Gracia Padaca**, elected governor of Isabela, who topped a 30-year political dynasty

"Feeling his life unraveling, Sef set in train a plan to murder his parents and his sister."

—Prosecutor **Mark Tedeschi** on Sef Gonzales, found guilty of the murder of his family in Australia

"We are certain that you are aware that lesbian and homosexual relationships are an abnormality of human nature."

—MTRCB statement scolding the show "The Buzz" for airing a lesbian wedding

"I felt insulted by the way the letter was worded, which I considered a personal attack on my being gay. Since when has a promise of love been promiscuous, unfriendly and offensive on prime time television?"

—**Boy Abunda**, host of "The Buzz"

"It's like having them both with me wherever I go."

—Elected Senator **Pia Cayetano**, on why she wears a locket with a picture of her late father Rene Cayetano and her late infant son Gabriel

"If you can't beat them, join them. That's why, with the help of some friends, I'm coming out with a book of my quotes. There's nothing like the original."

—**Melanie Marquez**

"Shut up. You're wasting our time. Taxpayers of the Philippines."

—**Suzette Pido**, in a note she sent to Rep. Didagen Dilangalen during a joint canvassing session

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!"

Dilangalen to Rep. Raul Gonzalez

"Jollibee is a success story based on solid foundations, not a meteor that will burn itself out."

—**Howard Stevenson**, chair of the judging panel at the World Entrepreneur Awards, when Jollibee President Tony Tan Caktiong was declared Entrepreneur of the Year

"I know in my heart that he won."

—**Susan Roces** on FPJ

"I would kill to protect my family. Why did they drag my daughter, who is a minor, into a controversy that was meant to hurt me?"

—Actress **Rosanna Roces**, on rumors that her daughter Grace was pregnant

JUNE

"I don't want a complicated life. When I marry, I will be faithful to my wife."

—**Oyo Boy Sotto**, promising he won't be like his father, Vic Sotto, who has children by different women

"She pictured me as a hoax and a mere aerobics instructor incompetent to conduct cosmetic procedures."

—**Dr. Vicki Belo** in a P10 million libel suit against Rosanna Roces, who accused her of botching a liposuction job

"I thank Sen. Barbers for being a gentleman."

—Sen. **Rodolfo Biazon**, after he beat Robert Barbers to become the 12th place senator

"I am an upright man with deep moral convictions."

—**Mike Arroyo**, after filing multiple charges against people and publications who accused him of election offenses

"A judge should never allow himself to be moved by pride, prejudice, passion or pettiness in the performance of his duties."

—**The Supreme Court**, after sacking Judge Jose Caoibes Jr. for improprieties and abuse of power

"I go to Divisionia. I love it there. I go with my mom."

—**Borgy Manotoc**, on where he goes shopping.

"He brought down the Evil Empire and made the world safer for my children and theirs. For that, I will be forever grateful for his leadership."

—**Oliver North**, former national security aide of former US President Ronald Reagan, upon Reagan's death

"Can you please tell Sen. Pimentel not to delay any more the canvassing?"

—**Jaime Cardinal Sin** to Mrs. Bing Pimentel in a phone conversation, after Pimentel spoke for four hours in congress

"You Eminence, Nene is only seeking the truth."

—**Bing Pimental** to Cardinal Sin

"I thought she would be imperious. She was funny and charming... I can understand how people allowed her to get away with things."

—Filmmaker **Ramona Diaz** on interviewing Imelda Marcos for the controversial documentary "Imelda"

"There will never be another musician who did as much to break down the perceived walls of musical genres."

—Music producer **Quincy Jones** on the death of "soul man" Ray Charles

"See what proper love and care can do for an animal?"

—**Luis Buenafior Jr.** of the Animal Kingdom Foundation Inc. (AKFI), on news that Sweet, an *askal* they rescued from a Baguio slaughterhouse, won as Dog of the Year in a competition in the United Kingdom

"My children and I love Philip Salvador, but that doesn't mean that if he gives me that P5 million I will just shut my mouth"

—**Cristina Decena**, former lover of the actor, on filing an estafa case against Salvador for owing her P15 million

"A lot of presidential memoirs, they say, are dull and self-serving. I hope mine is interesting and self-serving."

—Former US President **Bill Clinton** on his book "My Life"

"The nails were not placed there as a mere prank. The suspects intended to immobilize the roads."

—**MMDA Chair Fernando**, after some 133 cars blew their tires when spikes were scattered all over Edsa

"Korean soldiers, please get out of here. I don't want to die. I don't want to die."

—**Kim Sun-II**, Korean translator who was beheaded on film by Islamic militants in Baghdad

"This is not a popularity contest. And I'm not representing the Philippines in the Mr. Universe contest, either."

—**Edu Manzano**, chair of the Optical Media Board, on allegations that he is becoming unpopular for his crackdown on fake DVDs

"I disagree that I'm on the wrong side. I'm just not on your side."

—Rep. **Francis Escudero**, to a woman in the Batasang Pambansa gallery who told him he was bright, but "on the wrong side."

"I will not take this sitting down...They should treat senior artists with respect."

—Veteran actress **Celia Rodriguez**, complaining of getting less billing than she deserved for the film "Naglalayag"

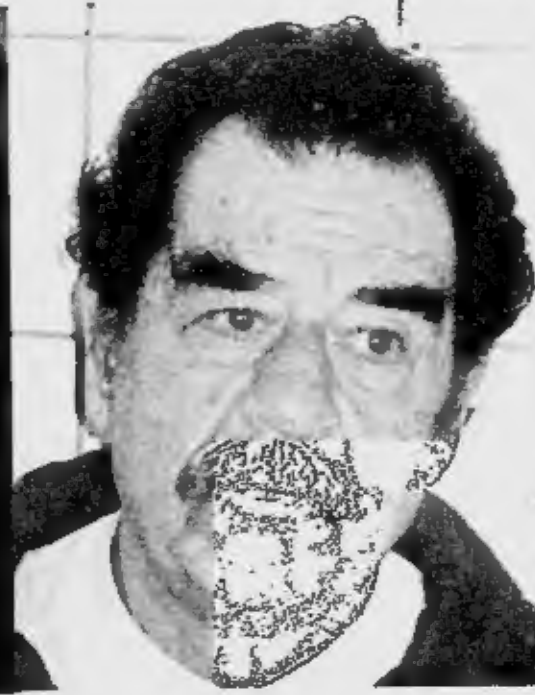
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DIDAGEN Dilangalen

FRANCIS Escudero

MIKE Arroyo

SADDAM Hussein





CINDY Kurleto



GMA



EDU Manzano



RIO Diaz-Cojuangco

Quotes...from page 4 JULY

"I'm just walking my talk and talking my walk that I'm *kontra-politika*."

—Sen. **Jamby Madrigal** on why she attended GMA's inaugural rites on June 30, the only prominent opposition figure to show up

"Would you concede if you know you were cheated?"

—**Legarda**, commenting on the result of the polls at the oath-taking of San Juan mayor, JV Ejercito

"This is all theater, the real criminal is Bush."

—Former Iraqi strongman **Saddam Hussein** in a court appearance July 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, rejecting charges of war crimes and genocide against him

"I will not make an apology."

—Pangasinan Archbishop **Oscar Cruz** when slapped with a libel suit after accusing government gambling agency PAGCOR of sending its female employees allegedly to act as Guest Relations Officer during the birthday celebration of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo

"What's wrong with being a GRO? Does he consider himself an expert on GROs?"

—Pagcor media coordinator **Edward King** on Archbishop Cruz's "GRO" allegations

"She developed a martyr complex combined with the habit of rebellion, a truly deadly combination."

—**INQUIRER** founder **Eggle Apostol**, describing how a stage role as a martyred Tingguian princess during her high school days influenced her knack for taking on hopeless causes and winning them

"The country's interest is higher than my ego."

—Social Welfare Sec. **Dinky Soliman** after announcing her resignation on July 6 to support Macapagal-Arroyo's "political commitment" to name Vice President Noli de Castro to her post. De Castro, noting the public reaction, later declined the appointment

"I have very strong evidence. I'll see them in court."

—TV host **Kris Aquino** to GMA-7 executives whom she sued over an e-mail sent to columnists by its public relations officer Tet Defensor that criticized her talk show and personality

"A new world record has been set in the 100-meter dash. It was set by Filipino troops fleeing Iraq."

—Late night TV host **Jay Leno**, mocking Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to pull out 51 Filipino troops from Iraq in exchange for Angelo dela Cruz's freedom

"They don't read The New York Times in Mexico, Pampanga."

—Presidential spokesperson **Ignacio Bunye** on why Malacañang chose not to comment on The New York Times' scathing editorial describing the pull out of Filipino troops as "a victory for terrorists"

"Father has lost weight. We'll cook him crispy pata."

—**Judith de la Cruz** on news that her father, Angelo de la Cruz, was going to be released 17 days after he was abducted by Iraqi militants

"My mind was reeling. I was so stunned. I said, 'Omigod, it's a treasure trove.'"

—NY cab driver **Nestor Sulpico** upon finding the pearls worth \$70,000 left by his passenger. Sulpico, who earns \$80 a day, returned the gems and was dubbed by The New York Daily News as "New York's most honest taxi driver"

"He could have used a better-looking weapon. Or at least tried to embellish it. He could have decorated it with yellow ribbons."

—Former First Lady **Imelda Marcos**, recalling the assassination attempt on her by a bolo-wielding man, in the documentary "Imelda" by filmmaker Ramona Diaz

"It was like a glacier breaking up."

—Manila Mayor **Atienza**, of the eight-story Sal building in Divisoria that crashed down six hours after it started to tilt

"I have no reason at all, except that my son died and I was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and my psychiatrist said that I should try and engage in an activity that will distract me from my personal grief."

—Sen. **Defensor-Santiago** when asked why she ran anew for the Senate after her son committed suicide

"Before we ask a farmer to pay a higher tax on his favorite gin, shouldn't we first remove the tax exemption of surgical procedures for society matrons who want to have a J-Lo butt?"

—Palawan Rep. **Abraham Mitra**, on the government's proposal, to increase taxes on liquor and cigarettes

AUGUST

"This is sacrilege. Nobody should touch a painting without the consent of the artist. I'm still around after all."

—Angono-based muralist and sculptor **Nemi Miranda** on the restoration of the imposing mural of the People Power Revolution at the Edsa Shrine by the Archdiocese of Manila without his permission

"You're now the mother of two boys."

—Dr. **David Staffenberg** to Arlene Aguirre on the successful surgical separation in a New York hospital of her 2-year-old twins Carl and Clarence, who were born with the tops of their heads fused together

"I'm not afraid of you, Mark. Stop provoking me. You are only your father's son."

—**Melanie Marquez** to Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid, who said in an interview that he might file a case against Marquez for speaking ill of his family

"No feminist debates the fact that Jesus was born a man. Instead, we Catholic feminists cherish Jesus Christ as a feminist man and a sign of the feminine principle in God."

—**Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel** commenting on the Vatican letter written by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, claiming that the feminist movement emphasizes the subordination of women to men to fuel the antagonism between the two sexes

"Please—all the men in the country—so that I don't have to be rude to you, do not attempt to kiss me."

—**GMA** during a Pulong-Bayan in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, after the emcee said a man in the crowd wanted to kiss her but had hesitated because he had not brushed his teeth

"The same-sex marriages authorized by the officials are void and of no legal effect."

—**California Supreme Court** ruling voiding some 4,000 gay weddings previously allowed by San Francisco's young mayor, Gavin Newsom

"I told myself to just let go and trust the one above."

—RP archer **Jasmin Figueroa** who defeated two-time Olympic medallist Natalia Valeeva of Italy in the women's individual competition

"Check the inside of your collar."

—Former Environment Sec. **Elizea Gozun**, saying that a well-funded study has found that air in Metro Manila has become cleaner, a claim disputed by the Health Department

"Nonong is like a bolt coming out from the blue."

—Sen. **Aquilino Pimentel**, on the appointment of former Macapagal-Arroyo counsel **Avelino "Nonong" Cruz** as Defense Secretary, which he said came as a total surprise

"That is how justice must see, through the eyes of the heart. Feelingly."

—Misamis Occ. Judge **Ma. Nimfa Penasco-Sitaca** who, with eight other judges, was awarded the Gender Justice Award, for her compassion for women victims of violence

"We are already in the midst of a fiscal crisis and we have to face it squarely."

—**GMA** after 11 faculty members of the UP School of Economics warned that the Philippines is facing a financial meltdown in two to three years unless the government reined in its spending

"This is my biggest break so far."

—Confessed escort girl **Keanna Reeves** on accepting the endorsement and movie offers that came her way after she told a Senate hearing that some politicians have used her services

"Although I have retired, there are still rules that don't allow me to go abroad to receive awards."

—Dr. **Jiang Yanyong**, a military doctor given the 2004 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service for blowing the whistle on China's cover-up of the SARS epidemic. China blocked Jiang's trip to Manila to receive the award

"Finding places where Filipinas are detained for drug-related offenses is a course in geography."

—Bukidnon Rep. **Juan Miguel Zubiri**, citing a Foreign Affairs report showing that a growing number of Filipino women have become drug couriers and are now languishing in foreign jails

"These will probably add up to just a small amount, but it comes from our hearts."

—**Hector Villanueva**, class president of Silliman University's high school class '62, on the batch's decision to donate jewelry to help defray the government's estimated financial deficit of P3 trillion

"It's not the health department's responsibility to provide contraceptives."

—Health Secretary **Manuel Dayrit** when asked to define the government's family planning program

SEPTEMBER

"I think it's like the looming fiscal crisis. They're still in denial about the population problem."

—**Marissa Camacho-Reyes**, president of the Philippine Center for Population and Development

"Madame chair, I would like to protest the very dictatorial tendency which perhaps is caused by the lack of lucid interval at the moment."

—Sen. **Richard Gordon**, to Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, chair of the energy committee, when she ignored his question during the hearing on new power rate hikes

"We would like to create an environment where if you speak Filipino in English Zones, you will not get an answer."

—**Pamantasan ng Lunsod ng Maynila** president **Benjamin Tayabas** on its new policy that required its 10,000 students to speak English in English-designated areas at certain hours

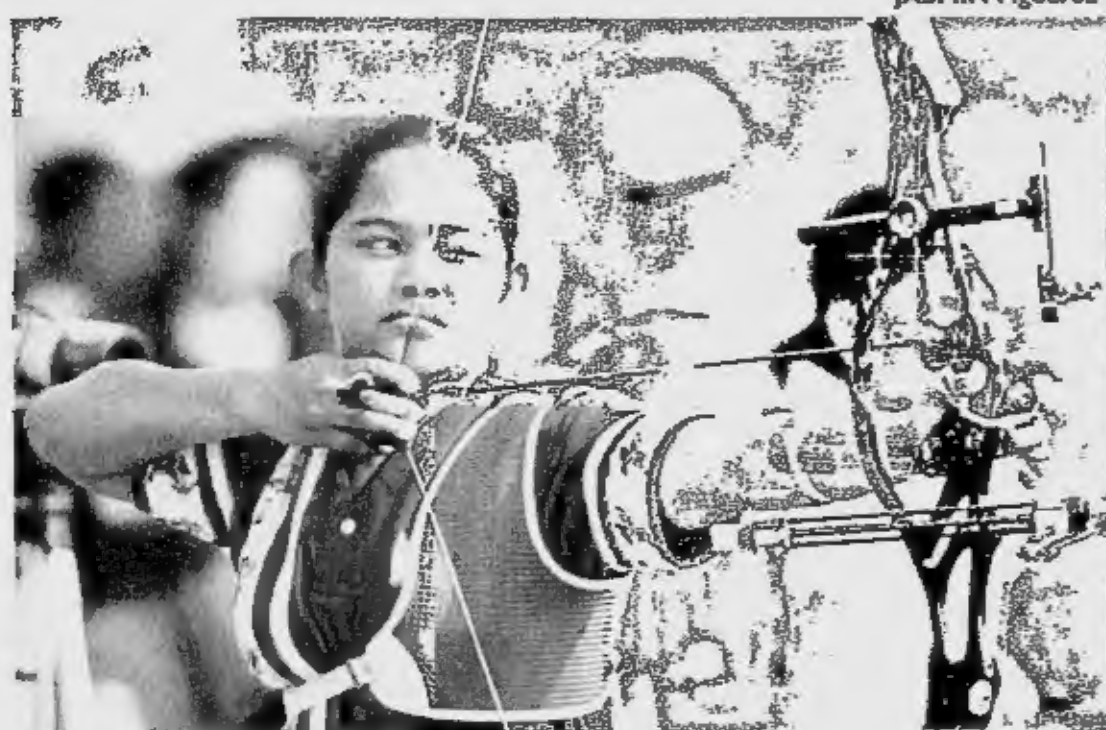
"If anything is taxable, sure, tax the church. What do you think of the church, greedy?"

—Manila Archbishop **Rosales** on the proposed tax on churches and religious groups, to raise government revenue. Rosales countered that the government should give part of its tax collection to the church for development projects

"Right now at least I have a chance to identify them. I need to put something in the coffin."

—**Albert Kundukhov**, who lost his mother, wife and daughter in the bloody end to the three-day school siege in Beslan, Russia. At least 300 children and adults died when Russian soldiers stormed the building held by Chechen militants

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JASMIN Figueroa



KEANNA Reeves



JAMBY Madrigal



SUSAN Roces



JOSE de Venecia

Quotes...from page 6

"Impose taxes on second or third mansions, condominium units, golf course shares, yachts, private planes and helicopters and other displays of extravagance."

—Former Economic Planning Sec. **Cielito Habito**, challenging GMA to tax the luxuries of rich families

"Don't ask, baka mayak kayo."

—National Treasurer **Mina Figueroa**, revealing that she resigned because she wanted higher pay and not because of the government's fiscal problem

"So please, let's all watch our country being showcased on international TV. I hope it will bring increased tourist interest in the Philippines."

—Energy Sec. **Vince Perez**, announcing that Malacañang officials will take a break from the financial crisis to watch "The Amazing Race" episode shot in Metro Manila and Palawan

"Like the proverbial thief in the night, he attacked when nobody was looking."

—Supreme Court decision disbaring former Danding Cojuangco legal counsel **Leo Palma** for "gross immoral conduct and violating his oath as a lawyer." Palma had secretly married his client's daughter, then 22, in Hong Kong without her parents' knowledge while he was still married to another woman with whom he has three children

"Susmariose! Wala na bang makuha ng iba?"

—Former President **Joseph Estrada** on GMA's appointment of ex-Sen. **Ramon Revilla** as head of the scandal-prone Public Estates Authority (PEA), the government's reclamation body

"I was a music teacher. I was choir director of El Shaddai. I believe I'm qualified otherwise the President would not have appointed me."

—El Shaddai spokesperson **Melquiades Robles**, defending his appointment as administrator of the Light Rail Transit Authority

"This brother and sister act made GSIS their private enclave."

—Rep. **Rolox Suplico**, disclosing how GSIS President and General Manager **Winston Garcia** and his sister and assistant, **Carolyn Garcia-Empemano**, incurred P5.25 million in unliquidated cash advances in 10 months alone in 2001

"This we did in our honest though naïve desire for change."

—Part of the apology statement that the leaders of the failed **Oakwood** mutiny read to GMA. The President accepted the apology but said that court martial proceedings against the six Magdalo leaders would still be pursued

"Any real church... will back up what I'm doing because I'm trying to save lives."

—Thal Sen. **Mechai Viravaidya**, also known as "the Condom King," urging Filipinos to use condoms despite the contrary stand of the conservative Catholic Church

"Instead of submitting peacefully, he opted to fight to resist arrest."

—Communist spokesperson **Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal**, on the assassination of breakaway leftist rebel **Arturo Tabara** who, police said, was shot by his former comrades

"We also go after Christians, Indians, Chinese."

—**Edu Manzano** on accusations that the OMB was only targeting Muslim traders in its campaign against pirated discs

OCTOBER

"We must defeat them on the battlefield. They are just fooling the government with the negotiation."

—Brig. Gen. **Victor Corpus** on his former comrades in the New People's Army, on the occasion of his retirement from active duty with the AFP

"If the government doesn't even know the already well-known big-time (jueteng) operators in Luzon, what does it know?"

—Archbishop **Oscar Cruz**, chair of the National Crusade Against Jueteng, daring the government to name names

"If I never had cancer, I wouldn't have found this much love for others, or received just as much love from them."

—**Rio Diaz-Cojuangco**, before she succumbed to cancer this year

"To be Echo's girlfriend means it's okay for everyone to kick your ass, even though they know you don't have any fault... I was hiding, lying and denying, and I hate lying. I would feel dirty after lying."

—**Cindy Kurleto**, revealing in an interview that she and boyfriend **Jericho Rosales** were forced to hide their relationship by ABS-CBN Talent Management to protect Rosales's soap opera love team with **Kristine Hermosa**

"For a long time, I was afraid of people. When somebody rang the doorbell at home, I would get scared and hide inside the cabinets."

—"Starstruck" survivor **Jennylyn Mercado**, on being abused by her stepfather when she was three years old

"I was afraid before that Hacienda Luisita would become another Mendiola Massacre. My worst fears have come true."

—Anakpawis representative **Rafael Mariano** after several striking workers at Hacienda Luisita were killed by police and military during a violent dispersal

"People file lawsuits for cutting down mango trees and killing dogs. How much more should we be indignant at the killing of our own people?"

—Fr. **Ramon Capuno**, parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Hacienda Luisita, on the death of striking workers

"There is nothing to be ashamed of. Go to our provinces and the people themselves will say that it is a good thing."

—**Davao del Sur** Congressman **Douglas Cagas**, defending the restoration of the "pork barrel" for members of Congress

"Every day has been a roller coaster ride. This has been the best Christmas ever."

—**Grace Nayan**, on hearing of brother **Angelito Nayan**'s release by a Taliban splinter group after being held hostage in Afghanistan, along with two other United Nations co-workers, for more than three weeks

"I'm the new Imelda Marcos."

—Hollywood actress **Catherine Zeta-Jones**, admitting that she seeks therapy in shopping for shoes, and once more confirming Imelda's global iconic status

NOVEMBER

"What's the best business school in the country? The PMA, because it produces millionaires."

—Text joke circulated during the Congressional hearings on corruption

Maligayang Pasko



charges against Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia

"Not even a bicycle will be spared."

—A sheriff, enforcing the Sandiganbayan's seizure order on Maj. Gen. Garcia's assets

"Why did they have to take it out on my son? I would like an answer to this question. If not I will filibuster on this bill and it will never pass for the six years I am in this Senate."

—Sen. **Defensor-Santiago** at the Senate deliberations on the new charter of the University of the Philippines, blaming officials of the university for her son's suicide last year

"I'm blessed that I'm a Poe. It helps being his son but I'm really just a normal person."

—**Ron Allan "Ronian" Poe**, son of action king **Fernando Poe Jr.** by actress **Ana Marin**

"Explain to us this poverty."

—Sen. **Ping Lacson**, lauding Air Force Col. **Andres Largo** and Army Col. **Eduardo Gonzaga** for declaring a net worth of only P150,000 and P125,986, respectively during the confirmation of their promotion

"We have determined that the story is not true. Our heart goes out to a child like Faye whose mother is in deep emotional problems."

—The Bread of Life Ministry, after member **Cathy San Juan** apparently fabricated a story about her daughter **Fay Nicole** winning a nonexistent science and technology contest in Brisbane, Australia

DECEMBER

"Would the chairman accept my amendment in

the event that I prove, through Pythagorean theorem, that this is a point at which the consumer will not buy cigarettes?... I went through tedious computations to show why we have reached certain elasticities. I did this to prove a point, that there is an econometric model and that there is an empirical data and process."

—Senator **Jamby Madrigal** during Senate hearings on the computation of "sin" taxes on tobacco and other products

"Given the data and the regression analysis, what is the slope coefficient that was found?"

—Sen. **Mar Roxas**, responding to Senator **Madrigal** during the same Senate hearing

"People don't want to watch your coverage because you capitalize on personal hurt."

—actress **Susan Roces**, widow of FPJ to ABS-CBN's **Karen Davila**, charging the network with being biased against FPJ in its coverage of the presidential election

"My daughter brought us so much happiness and so much joy. For us, she is really irreplaceable. Next to my wife, she is the light of my life."

—Speaker **Jose de Venecia**, mourning the death of his youngest daughter **KC** in a fire that razed his house

"Gandang lalake talaga. Hanggang ngayon, nababakla pa rin ako sa iyo. (You're such a handsome man. Until now, you make me turn gay)"

—Comedy King **Dolphy**, addressing FPJ while speaking at the necrological service for the late action king

Love Notes

By Joe D' Mango



Just Friendship, Not Love

I got so blind that I believed Ryan's show of caring and love was meant for someone more than a friend

Dear Joe,

I'm Francine, a college student, and an avid fan of Love Notes on TV and the radio.

It's been two years now since I met Ryan. He joined our school organization and we became casual acquaintances. But late last year, we got a chance to become closer. We would talk about anything under the sun, including love. He would always tell our friends that I'm one of the few people who really knew him. He made me feel very special, visiting me at home and texting me often. He would always tell me to take care of myself.

It wasn't long, Joe, before I realized that I was falling for Ryan. I used to deny this feeling to myself but I was just so overwhelmed that there was someone who shows concern for a simple girl like me. But I'm afraid that I'll be rejected again. My recent heartache was over Gerard, who fell out of love for me and courted my best friend, Marianne. I got terribly hurt. And Ryan helped me stand again and made me realize that there's life after pain.

But history repeated itself. I got so blind that I believed Ryan's show of caring and love was meant for someone more than a friend. I had to tell myself to stop dreaming and wake up in the real world. I did when he told me that he was in love with our friend Nicole and he was ready to take the risk of courting her. I was hurt again and cried every night, and even in school.

I started to avoid Ryan but he called me up one day and asked what my problem was. He asked if I fell for him and I answered yes. He told me that nothing will change, he'll still be the same Ryan I knew.

Joe, I can't accept the fact that Ryan and Nicole are in love with each other now. I want to be happy for them but I can't. I wanted to convince myself that this was all God's plan. God has His own reason for making things happen. I'm trying to move on because I have never seen Ryan as happy as he is now. But every time I see them together, the pain comes rushing back. I don't know what I'll do. I don't want to lose our friendship. I love Ryan but he doesn't love me. Please help me, Joe.

Francine

Dear Francine,

It has always been said that sometimes the only person

who can make us happy is the same person who makes us cry. But most of the time, we don't find this happiness because the person who made us cry doesn't love us at all. We all know that love has a way of painting the world around us with beautiful colors. It can make us see something that is not real, something that is not there at all. A person in love would often give more meaning to the actions of another person which he or she interprets as some form of caring or even a gesture of love.

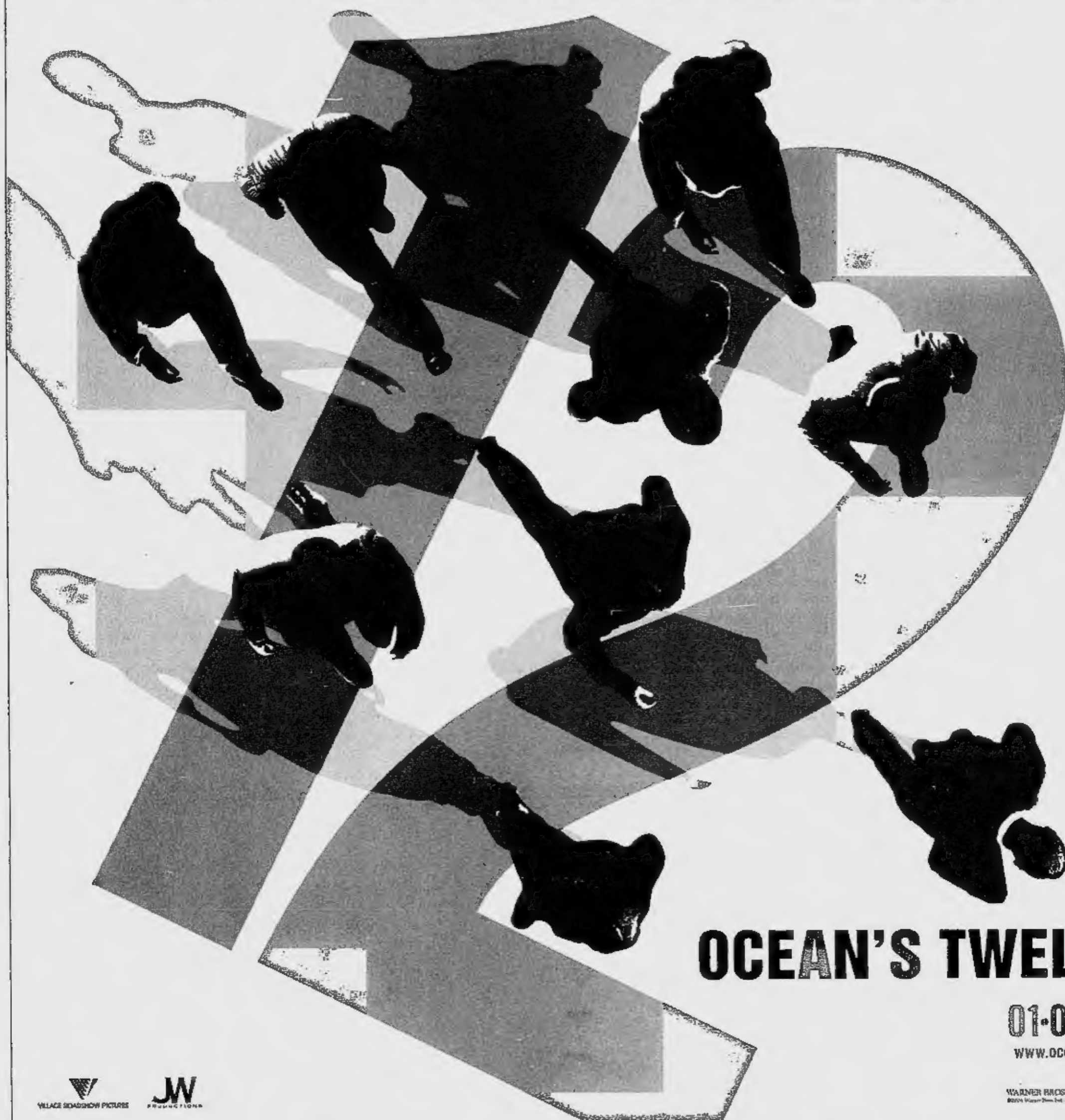
But the thing is, when we are blindly in love, we really don't see the world around us as it is. We see it differently. Some people even build their own world of make-believe where they can live happily ever after. But the only "after" there can be is disillusionment.

I know it's hard to see the difference between love and friendship when it's love that we want so much. You have given a different meaning to Ryan's friendship and then you found out that it was simply friendship. Yet you are still holding on to that notion of love. Francine, I know it is one of the most difficult things to do but sometimes the only way to prove our love for a person is to simply give him the freedom to choose who he wants to love, even if it may not be us. Let us always remember that the greatest challenge in this life is how to love unselfishly and make other people happy even if it means giving up our own happiness.

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Take My Breath Away
Theme from a Summer Place

ARTIST

Grusin Orchestra
Quincy Jones
Arthur Lyman
Jimmy Lushay
The Philadelphia Orchestra
Percy Faith and His Orchestra
David Holmes
Gianni Ferrio
Liberace
Norman Greenbaum
Berlin
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KEYWORD

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